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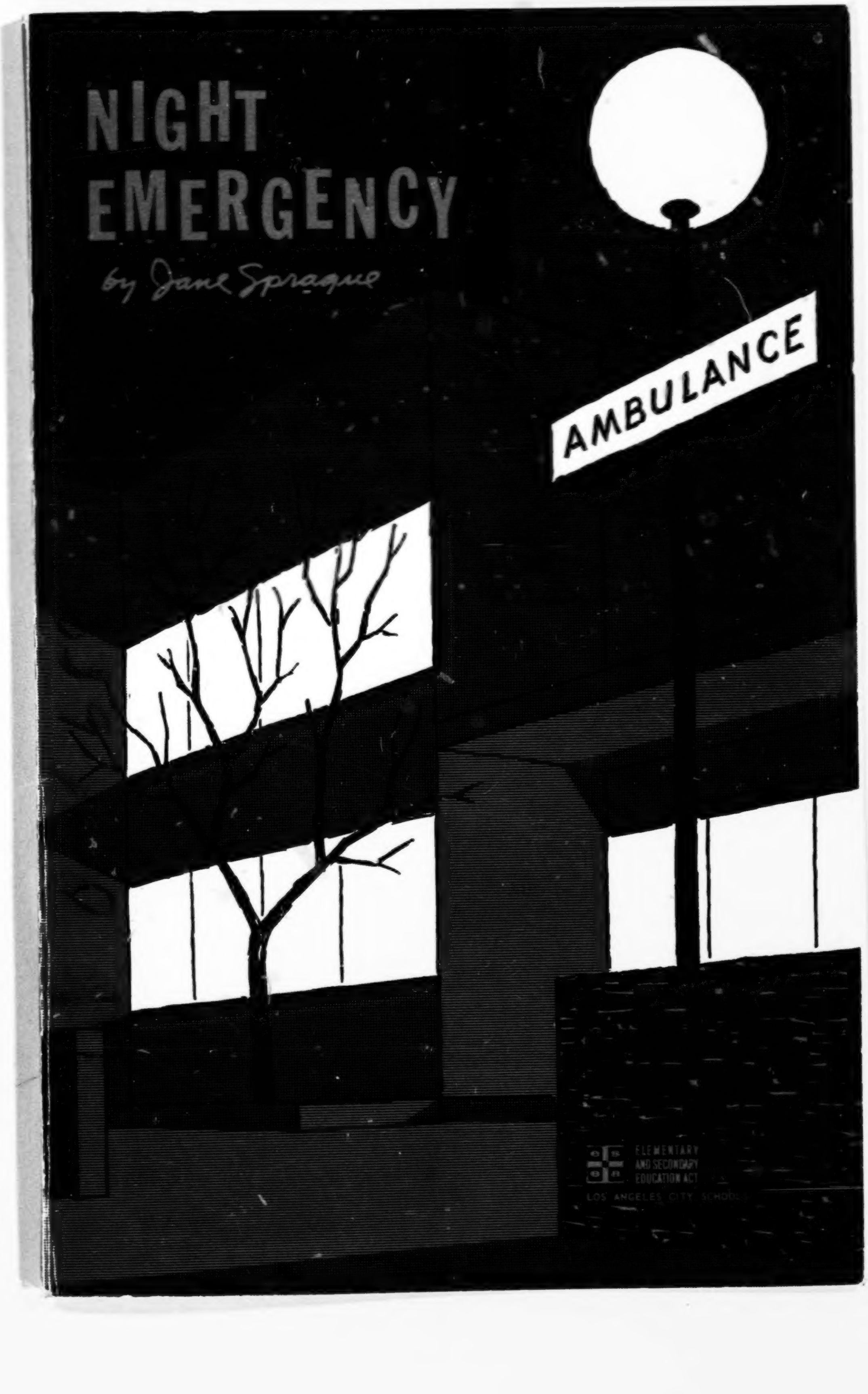
The document consists of three parts--an instructional bulletin for teachers of urban high school students with average or below average reading ability, a book of readings, and five novelettes prepared for these students. The bulletin offers guidelines on the ways to use the readings and suggestions for teaching literature to urban pupils as well as for stimulating effective discussion. Also presented are outlines of lesson plans, both general and specific. The paperbound, pocket sized book of readings contains both fiction and nonfiction selections written especially for city pupils. (NH)

NIGHT EMERGENCY

by Jane Sprague



ELEMENTARY
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EDUCATION ACT
LOS ANGELES CITY SCHOOLS

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by JANE SPRAGUE

B10 English

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NIGHT EMERGENCY

CHAPTER 1

Rexford Hamilton sat on the porch swing and pushed himself back and forth slowly with his long legs. He listened to the squeak of the chain that held the swing. He had been listening to that chain for as long as he could remember.

He drank more beer from the cold can in his hand. The street was quiet tonight. It was fall, and it was the first Monday since school started. Everybody was inside, watching TV or doing homework.

Rex was glad that stuff was all over for him. No more school for old Rex. He had better things to do.

Behind his head the window of his mother's living room showed a warm light through the drawn-down window shade. He could hear the TV going. He knew his younger brothers and sisters were doing homework. Only Chuck was excused. He was getting ready to go to work.

Work! Rexford smiled. He tilted the beer can again and drank half of the beer at once. What could that kid do? Nobody had told Rex what kind of a job Chuck had found. And Rex was too proud to ask any questions.

Just then, the door opened and Chuck came out. He was dressed in a white uniform, shirt and pants, all new and starched.

Rex sat up. "Well, look at that. You're going to work in a laundry! Now ain't that nice."

Chuck stopped and looked at his older brother. Rex had been Chuck's worst enemy all the way. Chuck was used to nasty cracks and endless teasing.

"Not a laundry. The new hospital. I'm going to be an orderly."

"Oh, an *orderly*." Rex smiled. "Well, now, that's much better than sorting somebody's dirty laundry, ain't it? You'll get to empty bedpans and clean up messes if you're an orderly. That's a *much* better job. And you'll get rich, too. Someday you might even get promoted to head orderly, if you're a good boy." Rex lifted his beer can in a toast to Chuck. "Congratulations! I'm proud of you, little brother."

Chuck watched him empty the can and then throw it out into the street. "I have to go. See you later."

"Oh, by all means. Don't let me keep you."

Rex watched Chuck walk briskly down the street. He was such a square. Always had been.

Rex got up and stretched. He was so tall he could touch the ceiling of the porch with his fingers.

He straightened his tight-fitting pants and pulled down his newest ten-dollar shirt. It was time to go downtown.

He met his friends in the pool hall as usual. They played a couple of games, and then they went to the Hangout for a few beers.

A guy called Dugan came up to the table and dragged a chair over so he could sit down with Rex and his friend, Mugsy.

"Hey, Rex, the Top is in town," Dugan said.

"Who's the Top?" said Mugsy.

Dugan glared at Mugsy. "Who's this creep, Rex? I'm not talkin' with any squares around."

Rex smiled. "This is Mugsy, Dugan. He's a new man, but he's not a creep. I just haven't told him about Mr. Top, that's all. He's okay. Go ahead. Talk."

Dugan looked at Mugsy's tough, scarred face for a minute and then went on. "Mr. Top is in town. He's lookin' for some stuff. Things have been kinda tight, and the junkies are ready to pay anything. If you've got any ideas, now is the time to sell 'em."

Rex looked at Mugsy. He could see that Mugsy wouldn't need an explanation. Mugsy caught on fast.

"I haven't had any good leads for a while," Rex said.

"The new laws are making it harder and harder to get stuff. Some of the junkies have even tried to raid hospital drug rooms," Mugsy said.

Rex sat up straight. He had a great idea!

"Hey, I think I have a lead. My brother just got a job as an orderly in the new hospital."

"Is he cool? I thought you said he was a square."

"He is."

"Then he'll never help you. He'll be too dangerous. Mr. Top wouldn't go for that."

Rex smiled at Dugan. Sometimes Dugan was stupid. "I'll get a job, too. My brother will be glad to help me do that. I'll play it real cool. I'll act like a square. And when I know my way around, I'll get into the drug room and clean it out."

"Afterwards you better head for T.J. and keep out of sight."

"No, I'll keep right on working. They'll never figure it out. Then after a few weeks, I'll quit and have a ball."

Rex drank his beer and ordered more. He felt great. This was what he liked. He liked life to be exciting. He liked that life-and-death feeling he got when he was part of a plan like this. He liked to play a dangerous game. It made him feel really alive.

"Tell Mr. Top I'll have some stuff for him in about two weeks. Don't tell him how, though. That's for us to know. Ain't that right, Mugsy?"

"Yeah, I guess so." Mugsy looked sleepy.

"Well, I'll see you in a couple of weeks." Dugan finished his beer and left.

"Let's go home, Rex. I'm sleepy," Mugsy said.

Rex looked at him. Mugsy was no fun. He got sleepy after three beers. Rex never got sleepy.

"*You* go home. I'm just getting started." Rex got up and headed for Wilma's Place. There'd be lots going on there. Mugsy could sleep it off. Rex was going to dance the night away. There'd be time enough tomorrow to find out about getting a job at the hospital.

CHAPTER 2

It took a lot of talking to get Chuck to believe that Rex really wanted a job at the hospital.

"No kiddin', Chuck. I got to thinkin' about you going off to work in those nice clean clothes. I'm older than you. I should have a steady job, too. Especially now that I'm not going to school. And I know Mom needs the money for the kids. I really want to be an orderly, too. Honest."

Rex looked as innocent and serious as a preacher. Chuck looked hard to see if Rex was pulling his leg, making fun of him. But Rex wasn't smiling. His voice really sounded like he meant it.

"All you have to do is introduce me to them. All you have to say is that I'm your brother. Then, if they won't take me, that's my hard luck."

"Well, I know they are still hiring guys, so they probably will take you. But I still don't think you're going to like it, Rex."

"Sure, I will. I can do anything if I make up my mind to do it. You just watch and see." Rex knew he had won his point. Chuck would help him.

The following Monday evening, Rex and Chuck walked together to the hospital. Rex felt funny wearing the loose white pants of his uniform. He was glad the hospital was nearby. He would hate his friends to see him dressed up like a laundry man. He could hear them kidding him, calling him "Dr. Kildare."

The boys walked fast, not talking. When they got to the hospital, Rex found that he was assigned to the emergency ward. Chuck worked in another building.

They agreed to meet in the morning to walk home together. It was funny going to work at eleven o'clock at night.

Rex belonged to the team under Dr. Cramer. The nurse was Miss Hunt, and the intern would be whoever was on duty. Rex found that wearing the white uniform helped him fit into the team. He looked like one of them.

Miss Hunt started him putting some bandages and supplies into the proper place. He had just about finished when he heard a siren screaming. It was funny to know it wasn't the cops. For once, Rex didn't have to worry about that.

When the ambulance pulled up to the door, Rex saw the emergency team go into action. The two men from the ambulance wheeled the stretcher into the first emergency room. They lifted the old man onto the table. He was big and heavy for an old man.

"He fell through the railing of his porch," one of the ambulance men said. "He fell about eight feet. Can't move from the waist down."

"Does he have a family?"

"Not as far as we could find out. He doesn't speak English."

"Okay," said Dr. Cramer. "Leave your papers with the Admission Office."

"Sure."

Rex finished what he was doing and stood quietly near the door of the X-ray room. He knew they were too busy to give him more work, so he just watched. This was better than TV. Rex had a feeling of excitement, but he didn't know why.

Rex watched as the doctor tried to talk to the old man.

It was hard.

"We'll have to use dye. Got to find out where his back is broken, if it's broken. Get the X-ray technician and the intern," Dr. Cramer said.

"Yes, Doctor." Miss Hunt went to call them.

The intern came right away. They took him into the X-ray room.

"Let's turn him over on his stomach."

Rex could see that they would need help. He stepped forward just a little. He wasn't sure that they would let him touch a patient.

"Rex, come over on this side." Miss Hunt spoke without looking at Rex.

He took his place beside her. She showed him how to help turn the old man as quickly as possible without hurting him any more than they could help.

"He doesn't seem to feel much pain," the intern said.

Rex looked at the old man's face. It was gray looking. But his eyes were open.

No one paid any more attention to Rex, so he went back near the X-ray room door. When the girl who would take the X-rays came, the doctor told her what to do. The nurse brought some stuff in a big tube with a long needle in it. Rex felt weak in the knees. He didn't like needles very much.

The X-ray technician smiled at him, so he moved over closer to her.

"What are they going to do?"

"They're going to put that dye into his spinal column and then tip his body, head down. The dye will run down until it comes to the place where the pressure must be.

Then we'll know where the trouble it."

"Will it hurt?"

"The needle will be just a sharp prick, that's all."

"Lights out," said Dr. Cramer.

The X-ray technician turned out the lights. Rex blinked. When he could see again, he saw the doctor and the nurse and the intern standing around the old man.

A motor started. The table began to move and the old man's head began to go down. Heavy straps kept him from sliding off the smooth top of the table.

Suddenly, the doctor shouted, "Lights!"

The lights went on.

"Quick," the doctor said, "he's stopped breathing!"

The table came up flat again. The nurse ran out of the door. The intern and the doctor turned the man on his back. The intern began to breathe into his mouth.

It all happened so fast Rex didn't realize for a moment that he was seeing men fight against death right in front of his eyes. The old man's face was dark and grayish. Even Rex could see that he was dead.

The doctor plunged a needle into the man's chest. Then he began to massage the heart by pressing on the chest. The door swung open and two nurses came in with a long blue oxygen tank. In a moment the doctor had slipped the mask over the old man's nose and mouth and started the oxygen flowing.

Nobody said a word. Everyone was watching the old man's face. The intern was trying to feel a pulse. Rex found himself wanting the old man to live. Somehow, it was his fight, too. He felt his own heart pounding.

Then, the old man's eyelids began to move. He opened his eyes. The natural color came back to his face. Rex saw the doctor's shoulders relax. Rex turned and saw that the X-ray technician was smiling at him.

"This your first night on duty?"

"Yes, it is."

"Well, I'm glad we're having an easy night. Sometimes it gets exciting around here."

Rex smiled, but he wasn't sure whether she was kidding or not. He just hoped the rest of the night wouldn't be any worse. He felt tired already.

CHAPTER 3

By the time Rex got his first pay check, he had become a veteran. He knew how to help clean up an accident case without being sick at the sight of blood. He knew how to comfort hurt children and their scared parents. He understood the meaning of a lot of medical words. It was like having a secret language.

In fact, Rex began to feel just a little proud of his job. The first time a woman called him "doctor" by mistake, he thought he would explode with pride. After that, he saw that the patients looked at him with respect. They accepted his knowledge because he could talk the "secret language" with the nurses and doctors. They respected his white uniform and his easy way around the ward.

When he walked out of the hospital on Saturday morning with his first week's pay in his pocket, Rex felt like a king.

The day was going to be warm and sunny. The sky was clear blue. Everything was quiet because it was so early, and it was Saturday,

Rex wasn't going to sleep. He felt too good. He didn't wait for Chuck, either.

When Rex got home, his mother was having coffee in the kitchen. She poured Rex a cup and had another with him.

"I got paid today, Mom."

"That's good, Rex. It's nice they pay you every week, instead of every other week. The money seems to stretch farther that way."

Rex took out his wallet and found a nice new twenty dollar bill. He put it on the table beside his mother's coffee. "That's for you."

Rex saw the look of shock and surprise on his mother's face. Then, for some crazy reason her eyes filled with tears. My gosh, he thought, she's not going to cry over a measly twenty bucks, is she? Why lots of times I could have given her a hundred.

"Gosh, Mom, what are you crying for?"

"You never gave me money before, Rex. And this is money you earned. You really worked hard for it." She wiped her eyes.

"Aw, Mom. Cut it out. You women bawl about the craziest things." Rex got up and left the kitchen. "I'm going out."

Rex took a shower and dressed in his favorite pants and shirt. He was going downtown. He had a little shopping to do.

Rex had some breakfast in a coffee shop to kill time until the stores opened. Then he went into a men's clothing store.

He walked around and looked at everything. Then he bought a rich green sport jacket. He decided to wear it. When he walked out of the store, he knew he looked very sharp. Somehow, that jacket gave him a special pleasure, but he didn't know why.

Rex went to the pool hall and played a few games. Then he decided to see a movie. After the movie, he went over to the Hangout to get a beer and a sandwich.

Mugsy was there. He called Rex over.

"Hi, Mugsy. How you doin'?"

"I'm doin' okay, Rex. How you doin'?"

"Okay. Has anything been going on down here?"

"Not much. That guy Dugan was here looking for you."

Rex ordered a sandwich and a beer. Then he looked at Mugsy. "When was Dugan here?"

Mugsy lit a cigarette. "He came a couple of nights ago. He said he'd be back."

The waiter brought Rex a beef sandwich and a glass mug full of foamy beer. Rex looked around at the people. Even though it was early, a lot of people were in the Hangout. Rex knew that many of them worked at hard, boring jobs all week, just to get paid so they could come to the Hangout and spend it all getting drunk.

Rex looked at them and found that they didn't make him feel excited as they usually did. He took a long drink of beer. He was probably tired, that was it. He'd feel better after he ate the sandwich and had another beer.

But an hour later, Rex still wasn't having any fun. Mugsy didn't have much to say, and Rex felt restless.

"I think I'll go over to Wilma's Place. If Dugan comes while you're here, tell him where I am, okay?"

Mugsy nodded at Rex. Mugsy was beginning to look sleepy, Rex thought. He wouldn't last much longer.

Rex left the Hangout and started down the street. He met Dugan about a block from the Hangout.

Dugan didn't smile much. Rex wasn't surprised that he didn't smile now.

"Hello, Rex. I've been looking for you."

"Yeah, Dugan. Mugsy told me."

"Where are you going?" Dugan lit a big cigar.

"I'm going over to Wilma's Place."

"I'll walk along with you," Dugan said.

They walked along the busy street full of early Saturday night crowds. Rex smelled the dark, bitter smoke from Dugan's cigar. Rex liked the smell, but he did not like the taste of cigars.

Dugan took the cigar out of his mouth and blew the gray smoke into the air. "Mr. Top is getting a little edgy about the stuff you promised to get."

Rex unbuttoned his new jacket and took a deep breath. "I told you a couple of weeks. I didn't start at the hospital until this week. I haven't even had time to find the drug room yet. You tell Mr. Top to lay off. I'll get the stuff when I'm ready."

Dugan puffed hard on the big cigar for another half block. "Mr. Top can get pretty rough when somebody gives him a phony deal. You might not like it."

Rex stopped walking. He glared at Dugan through the cloud of cigar smoke. "Look, Dugan, I'm not working for Mr. Top or anybody. I'm my own man. I'll get the stuff when I'm ready. He can like it or lump it."

Dugan dropped the half-smoked cigar and stepped on it carefully, grinding out its fire under his neat brown shoe. Then Dugan looked at Rex. "I'll tell Mr. Top what you say, Rex. I'll tell him exactly."

Rex hated Dugan suddenly. "You do that. You just go right ahead and do that, Dugan!"

Dugan looked long and hard at Rex and then turned and walked away without saying another word.

Rex shrugged his shoulders and walked on. What did he care about Dugan or Mr. Top? Nobody was going to rush Rex or tell him what to do.

When he got to the noisy bar at Wilma's Place, he went in and ordered a beer. There was a small group playing loud electric guitars and louder drums. A girl with fake blond hair and painted eyes was doing the latest dance and singing into the mike on the platform. The place was full of people and smoke.

Rex drank his beer and listened to the sounds. Usually he felt a thrill of excitement in this place, and the strong beat of the music would make him feel like dancing. Usually, the girls would look good to him when they tried to get him to dance with them.

Tonight, he sat at the bar and drank without feeling anything at all. He couldn't figure it out. He couldn't understand why the feeling of danger and excitement wouldn't come to him. He always had felt so alive at Wilma's Place. He had always felt so strong, so much a man.

Rex drank another beer and smiled at one of the girls, but she didn't look interested. He didn't really care.

Finally, he decided to leave. The only thing he really felt, suddenly, was tired.

Rex left Wilma's Place and walked home through the cool night. He had a funny feeling that maybe somebody was watching him, but he wouldn't let himself turn around to look. He kept on walking. He even stuck his hands in his pockets, but for the first time he felt afraid. He had never seen Mr. Top; no one he knew had ever seen him. But Rex knew he was important in the drug trade and Mr. Top's organization was city-wide. Rex began to realize that he was playing in the big league this time.

By the time Rex got home, he was covered with sweat. He went into the house and shut the door, feeling so weak that he had to lean against the wall for a minute. Everybody was watching television, so no one saw him.

When he felt better, he went to bed, undressing in the dark so that no one outside could see a light and know where he slept.

CHAPTER 4

Rex went to the beach with his family on Sunday. He had never gone with them since he had grown up. The younger kids were glad that he was with them. They laughed and giggled all the way in the car, as if it was a party.

Rex swam far out in the sea and enjoyed the cold water and the still-warm sun. He made sand castles with the little ones, played catch with Chuck, and even helped his mother hunt for sea shells.

It was a very square day, but Rex was surprised to see how good he felt. And he didn't have to worry about running into Dugan on the beach.

The next day he slept and watched television until it was time to go to work.

When he got to the emergency ward, Miss Hunt was waiting for him.

"Rex, I'm glad you are early. I need some things from the drug room. Here is a list, and here is a tray to carry the stuff on."

"Okay, Miss Hunt, but I don't know where the drug room is."

"Oh, it's in the main building, in the basement, at the north end of the hall."

Rex repeated the directions and left. Well, he thought, she made it very easy for me.

He looked at the list of drugs Miss Hunt had given him as he walked along. He didn't know how to say some of the names, but he knew that none of the drugs were the kind Mr. Top was interested in. Well, at least he'd find out where the drug room was. And he'd get a good chance to look it over in the light.

When Rex got to the drug room, the man inside took the list and the tray and put the things Miss Hunt wanted on it. While he did that, Rex looked at the shelves full of different bottles. He had never seen so many bottles and boxes.

"There are quite a few things on the list," Rex said. "It's a good thing you aren't too busy this time of night."

The man answered without turning around. "Yeah, it's not too bad right now. Some nights, though, it's like a madhouse down here."

Rex noticed a special case with glass doors on it. The man didn't get any of Miss Hunt's drugs from that case. Rex was sure that the drugs the the junkies needed were in that special case.

The man finished his work and carried the full tray to Rex. "There you go. I'll put a towel over that for you so you won't knock anything off. Just wait a second."

The man stepped into a back room and came back with a fresh white towel which he spread over the tray.

"Thanks. Be seein' you, " Rex said.

When Rex got back to the emergency ward, Miss Hunt showed him where to put the drugs and medicines.

Then, they had a couple of quick cases to take care of. Rex cleaned up the room after the patients left and took a break in the staff room.

Before he was through, the ambulance siren told him a new case had arrived.

He went out and helped them put the girl on the table. Miss Hunt sent for Dr. Cramer and the intern.

"Overdose of some drug, probably heroin or maybe morphine," said the ambulance driver.

"Okay, thanks. You give all the information to admissions and call the police for me, will you?"

Miss Hunt started to loosen the girl's clothes. Rex saw a change come over Miss Hunt's pretty face.

"Look at this, Rex." She held out the sick girl's left arm. Rex saw that it was full of bruises and sores where the girl had been giving herself drugs.

"If there is anyone in the world that deserves to die for a crime, I think it's the man that sells drugs to kids like this." Miss Hunt was so mad she was growing pale. "You better get the oxygen tank, Rex, but I think it's too late for this one."

Rex ran to get the tank and wheeled it back to the room as fast as he could. Just as he got there,, another ambulance pulled in with two bleeding people crushed in an auto accident. Miss Hunt went to help them, and Dr. Cramer and the intern were needed to get the bleeding stopped.

Rex was alone with the drugged girl. He didn't dare try to put the oxygen mask over her face. He didn't know how to turn it on or how much to give.

The girl's body jerked as if it was in a big cramp. Rex was afraid she would fall off the table, so he went to her and put his hand on her shoulder.

"Take it easy, Miss." Rex said, softly. "You're going to be all right."

The girl fell back and her eyes opened. She stared up at the ceiling. Rex knew she wasn't seeing anything.

Her mouth moved. She was trying to talk. It seemed to take all the strength she had to whisper one word—*help*.

She whispered it twice. Then she grabbed Rex's hand and held on. Her body arched with a terrible surge of strength, and her eyes opened wide. Then, slowly, her body went limp, and her eyes seemed to go dark in a way Rex had never seen before.

He stood there, her hand in his, staring at those unseeing eyes until Miss Hunt rushed back.

She took one look at the girl and then spoke gently to Rex. "Come on, Rex, it's all over. Come on, now."

Rex looked at her and then back at the girl.

"She's gone, Rex," the nurse said. "She took too much. They never come out of it when they come in like that." Miss Hunt took the dead girl's hand away from Rex. "You'd better help the doctor now. He needs you, Rex."

Rex walked slowly into the hall, still feeling that small cold hand in his. How could a young girl like that die? Why did she take too much? Why had she used drugs at all?

Rex worked along the rest of the night, but he couldn't get that girl out of his mind.

Late in the night, when the emergency ward was quiet, Rex went into the hospital ward to get some air. He sat down on a bench and took a deep breath. Then out of the side door of the building, Rex saw Miss Hunt pushing a long cart. The figure on the cart was covered with a sheet. Rex knew it was the body of the dead girl. Miss Hunt was taking it to the hospital morgue until the girl's family could be located.

Rex watched the young nurse move briskly across the yard. She was not much older than the dead girl had been. Now the living girl pushed the dead one along on a cart.

Rex felt sick at his stomach, but he couldn't stop looking. Death was something he saw on television and read about in the paper, but Rex had never seen it really happen before. Something about that girl kept bothering him.

CHAPTER 5

The next night, Tuesday, Mugsy met Rex just as he was leaving his house to go to work.

"Hey, Rex. I got a message for you from Dugan."

Rex stopped. "Yeah, what is it?"

"Dugan says to tell you that by Thursday night Mr. Top wants the stuff you promised him."

"I can't get it that fast, Mugsy. Tell Dugan I have to have more time. I gotta move slow, see?"

"Okay, Rex. I'll tell him for you. But he ain't going to like it."

"Well, that's too bad. I can't help that. Don't worry. If he wants me to get the stuff for him, he's not going to work me over. I wouldn't be any good to him then." Rex gave Mugsy a quick smile.

"Yeah. I see what you mean," Mugsy said.

Rex watched Mugsy walk away. He was older and heavier than Rex. His face was beat up from the professional boxing he had done. He still walked with the bounce of the natural athlete.

Rex turned and started for work. As he walked, he thought of Mugsy. He was a faithful old guy. He would never double-cross anybody.

Later that night, around three o'clock, the ambulance guys brought in a robbery victim. Rex looked at the bloody mess that was the man's face.

"Wow, Mister, somebody really clobbered you."

The man tried to speak with his swollen mouth and broken teeth. "Rex, it's me! It's me–Mugsy!"

"Mugsy!" Rex couldn't believe it. "What happened?" But Rex didn't need to ask. Suddenly he knew what had happened to Mugsy.

The beaten man spoke again. "Dugan . . . Mr. Top."

Rex knew it. This was a warning. They weren't playing around. They were going to hold Rex to his part of the game.

Miss Hunt came in. "Rex, come on. We've got to get this man into X-ray. What's the matter with you?"

"Nothing, Miss Hunt." Rex began to wipe away the dark blood that still oozed from Mugsy's smashed face. Mugsy didn't try to talk any more. Rex tried to be as gentle as he could.

An hour later Mugsy was safe in a hospital bed in Chuck's building. It had taken thirty-two stitches to repair the cuts in Mugsy's face. He had two broken ribs and a mild concussion from being kicked in the head. The five broken teeth would have to be fixed later.

Rex sat down in the staff room to have a cup of coffee. He felt terrible. Only two more hours and then he would be through. What was he going to do about that drug room?

Rex sipped the coffee from the heavy green mug marked with his name. He smiled to see the wobbly red "REX" printed on the side of the cup in red nail polish. Miss Hunt had put the name there on his third night. Rex remembered how it had made him feel part of the team the night she did it.

Miss Hunt came in. She flopped down into the one big easy chair and stuck her tired feet out in front of her.

"Whew! I'm tired."

Rex poured her some coffee and handed it to her. Her cup had "FAY" printed on it, but Rex never dared to call her that.

"Here," Rex said, "have some coffee."

"Uhm, thanks, Rex." She took the cup and tasted it. "I couldn't keep going without coffee."

Rex watched her as she leaned her head back and closed her eyes to rest them.

She spoke without opening her eyes. "You seem different, Rex. Is anything bothering you?"

"Me? No, I guess not."

The little nurse opened her eyes and looked at Rex over the top of her cup as she took another sip.

"When you say 'I guess not,' that means that something is bothering you."

Rex could not look at her. How could he tell her how he felt?

The little nurse kept on. "You've lived around here all your life, haven't you?"

"Sure."

"Then you've seen guys beaten up like that man we had tonight, haven't you?"

"Yes." Rex moved in his chair.

"Then how come that guy seemed to upset you so much?"

Rex thought about it. Then suddenly, he knew. It wasn't just because it was Mugsy and it was Rex's fault. It was something else.

"Well," Rex said, "it's different being here and seeing the guy afterwards. I mean, when you are in a fight, you are excited and mad. You want to hurt the other guy. You want him to suffer. You want to beat him down."

"Yes," the nurse said, "so what's different about being here?"

"Well, seeing the guy all covered with blood and watching him suffer through the stitches and everything. I don't know. It's different, that's all."

"I think I see what you mean. Afterward there's no excitement, no glamor, only blood and pain." Miss Hunt finished her coffee. "You must be a pretty good fighter."

Rex looked at her. "Why do you say that?"

Miss Hunt smiled. "Well, if you've never seen the painful part of a fight, then you must have always won. You've never been beaten like that man was tonight. Am I right?"

Rex couldn't help smiling. "You're a pretty good detective, Miss Hunt."

She stood up and pulled her white nylon uniform straight. "You'll have to call me Fay now that I know all your secrets, Rex."

"Okay, Fay. But you don't know *all* my secrets."

They grinned at each other and went out to the ward.

Rex would have felt great except for the fact that Thursday was only two days away.

CHAPTER 6

On Wednesday, Rex went to the hospital in the early evening. He wanted to see Mugsy during visiting hours which ended at eight o'clock. He was glad they had put Mugsy into a private room.

He found Mugsy propped up against the pillows, watching the ball game on television.

"Hi, Mugsy."

"Hi, Rex." Mugsy couldn't smile. What Rex could see of his face under the bandages looked purple and sore. And his speech was thick because of his swollen lips and jaw.

"Don't try to talk. I just wanted to see how you were doing. I'm sorry they worked you over on my account."

"I'll live, I guess," Mugsy said slowly. "But you better get that stuff for them tomorrow night. They ain't kiddin' around."

"I know." Rex stared at the television without seeing a thing. "I don't know what to do."

Mugsy looked at Rex. "You could tell the cops and get Dugan picked up."

"No, I'm no fink."

"Well, Mr. Top don't like guys to back out of a deal," Mugsy said thickly. "Dugan made that very clear to me last night."

"Hey," Rex said, suddenly. "I got an idea. I'll get them some stuff that looks good but isn't. Then I'll leave town, and they'll think I was just dumb or something."

Mugsy's head went back and forth on the pillows. "Won't work. They know you ain't dumb."

"Yeah, I suppose they do." Rex wished he had never helped Mr. Top before. And wished he'd kept his big mouth shut about the hospital. If only he hadn't told Dugan how he was going to get the stuff! Then he could have told Dugan that his contact had been arrested or something. But now that they knew it was the hospital, they'd never leave him alone.

Mugsy knew how Rex felt. "They got you in a corner, Rex. You'll have to give them what they want."

"I'll figure something out, Mugsy. Don't worry."

Rex got up to go. "I'll see you tomorrow," he said. "Take it easy."

Rex left Mugsy's room and walked slowly down the hall. He was wearing his orderly's uniform. He knew no one would bother him.

He hadn't been in Chuck's building before, except last night when they brought Mugsy in. Rex wondered what floor Chuck worked on. He decided to take the elevator to the top and then look at each floor, since Chuck was working a longer shift that night to cover for a friend.

He had just stepped off the elevator when a nurse called to him.

"Orderly, quick! Help me get these wastebaskets out of the hall!"

Rex saw that there were white metal wastebaskets placed every thirty feet or so along the hall. The nurse grabbed one and shoved it into a room. Rex went quickly to the other side of the hall and moved a basket into the first room he came to. Together, Rex and the nurse cleared the hall.

They finished at the end where big doors opened into a men's ward which held about thirty beds.

"Quick! Open the doors." The nurse pulled one door open as far as she could. Rex pulled the other one open.

As soon as the doors opened, Rex heard a lot of the patients talking. He looked to the far end of the ward. Four doctors were gathered around a bed. And a nurse was hooking a bottle to a rack over the bed.

"What's going on?" Rex asked.

The nurse said, "We'd better get the elevator. They'll be coming soon. Come on. I may need you."

Rex and the nurse went back down the long hall to the elevators. She told him what happened as they walked.

"One of the patients choked on his food. By the time the nurse could get to him, his heart had stopped. Dr. Slater did an operation to get to his heart with a pocketknife right there in the ward."

"With a pocketknife?"

"There was no time to take him to surgery. He had to move fast. He massaged the heart, and the man is alive. Now we've got to take him to surgery and clean up the incision to make sure he doesn't get any infection."

The nurse pushed the button and when the elevator came she got in and held the door so it couldn't shut.

"You go and watch for them."

Rex stood in the hall in front of the elevator. In a moment, they came. They brought the patient right in his own bed, to avoid moving him. One intern held the clear bottle of water that was being piped into the patient's arm through a rubber tube. The three other doctors pushed the bed and watched the patient for any change. They moved fast.

"Here they come," Rex said.

When they got to the elevator, Rex helped to ease the bed into the car. The nurse got out, and the door shut as the elevator took the sick man to the top floor operating room.

The nurse smiled at Rex. "Thanks for your help. Are you a new man here?"

"No, I'm on duty over in emergency. I just came over here to see a friend who's a patient."

"Oh, well, thanks again."

"That's okay."

Rex waited till the elevator returned, and he went back to the emergency ward.

As he walked along, he realized that he felt good. That little scene on the fourth floor made it all come clear for Rex. He liked being around the hospital. He liked watching the doctors and nurses fight to save a man's life.

Suddenly, he stopped. That must be why he didn't get a charge out of Wilma's Place any more! Next to the excitement and life-and-death struggle he saw at the hospital every night, Wilma's Place was like a meaningless dull movie.

Rex walked on, smiling to himself. How about that! Two weeks in a hospital, and he was hung up on it.

Now he knew why he didn't want to rob the drug room. Rex felt strange. Nothing had ever surprised him before about his own feelings. He'd always been cool. He'd always kept people and things far enough away from him so that they never got under his skin. He could always take them or leave them alone. This feeling he had about the hospital was new. He didn't know how to handle it.

When he got to the emergency ward, he went into the staff room. He sat down in the big chair and went to sleep. It was about two hours until he went on duty.

CHAPTER 7

By the time Rex had finished work Wednesday night, he had made up his mind. He wasn't going to get the stuff for Mr. Top. He would keep on working at the hospital and just forget about it.

He walked home with Chuck early Thursday morning. Now that they both worked at the hospital, they seemed to have more to say to each other.

"Didn't you work an extra shift last night?" Rex asked.

"Yeah," Chuck said, "one of the early guys was sick."

"I was in your building last night, but I didn't see you. What floor do you work on anyway?"

"I'm on the third floor. We have all the terminal cases there. The men only, of course."

"What does 'terminal case' mean?"

"They're dying. It's like the end of the line for them."

"I don't think I'd like that." Rex shivered in the cool morning sunshine.

"I didn't think I would either, but you get used to it. And some of the men don't seem like they're dying. Half the time I don't believe it. But then they start to get weak, and you know the doctors were right."

Chuck yawned. He had to go to school for four more hours before he could go to bed. Rex was glad he didn't have to go.

"How do you like it over in emergency?" Chuck asked.

"I like it." Rex said. And before he knew it, he was telling Chuck about the old man who almost died on the table that first night, and about the girl who took the overdose of drugs and died holding Rex's hand.

Rex was surprised to find he had so much to say. Then he felt a little embarrassed. "I didn't mean to talk so much."

"That's okay," Chuck said. "Sounds like it's pretty exciting in emergency, all right."

The boys had reached home by that time, and Chuck went to get ready for school.

Rex slept and then watched television until it was time to go to work. He felt nervous now that Thursday was almost over. He was sure that if he could get through the night all right, the worst would be over.

When he went on duty, Fay Hunt was already busy with a case that the evening team had not quite finished with.

"Hi, Rex. I've got a feeling it's going to be a busy night. We've finished treating the man in the first room. Will you clean him up a little and get him into a hospital nightshirt? I'll call and get him a bed."

"Okay, Fay."

Rex took care of the man, and they got him tucked away all right. Then the ambulance brought in an attempted suicide.

Rex and Fay were busy getting blood pumped back into the woman's arm. She began to come to, finally, and Fay took her to a bed in the women's ward.

They took a break for coffee, but before they had time for more than a couple of sips, the police brought in an old lady who had fallen off the step of a bus.

Dr. Cramer said it was a bad break, so they took her up to the operating room to have it set and a cast put on.

"Well, maybe we can get two more tiny sips of coffee," Fay said, after the old lady was wheeled away.

"Yeah. It's been wild, hasn't it?"

"Yeah, wild. But nothing like the time we had a leak in a chlorine gas pipe and sixty-five people came in with gas poisoning. You should have seen it then."

"Sixty-five people! Where'd you put 'em all?"

"Outside, along the wall. Fortunately, it was summertime, and part of the treatment was plenty of fresh air."

"That must have really been a mess."

Rex drank his coffee and looked at Fay. Imagine it! Rex, the local hood, famous dropout, young man with a record, sitting here talking with a pretty nurse! And she was treating him like a respectable human being. Rex sat up straight in his chair. More than anything else right now, he wanted to keep her respect.

The telephone rang.

"I'll get it," Rex said.

He went to the phone and took the message. "They're bringing in a guy with terrible back pain. They think it may be a kidney stone," Rex said when he came back.

Fay finished her coffee and got up. "Okay, we'll put him in Room Three."

They got the room ready and sent for Dr. Cramer and the intern. By the time the ambulance came, they were ready.

The patient was a short, heavy man who looked as if he had done weight lifting in his younger days.

The doctor examined him and listened to his story. The man found it hard to talk because of the sharp pains that attacked his lower back.

"Can't you just give me something for the pain," said the man. "I can answer your questions better then."

"Well, I don't like to give you any medicine until I'm sure what the trouble is. I think I'd better have some X-rays first," Dr. Cramer said, turning to the nurse.

"All right, Doctor," Fay said. "Rex, wheel Mr. Nelson down to X-ray. He can change to his hospital gown there while you are waiting for the technician to come. It will just be a few minutes."

"Sure," Rex said. He helped the intern put Mr. Nelson on the high bed on wheels and pushed him out of Room Three, down the hall, and into the X-ray room. Then Rex shut the door so that Mr. Nelson could change out of his street clothes. Rex stayed in the room to help him.

As soon as the door was shut, Mr. Nelson sat up on the bed.

"You better take it easy, Mr. Nelson."

"Is your name Rex?"

Rex was surprised at the question. People in pain didn't usually care what anybody's name was. Rex looked at Mr. Nelson.

"Yeah, that's my name. Why?"

"Do you know a guy named Dugan?"

Rex felt his heart miss a beat.

"Yeah, I know him."

Mr. Nelson put his legs over the edge of the bed and stood up. He was shorter than Rex but a good hundred pounds heavier. His eyes were cold and intelligent.

"Dugan told me you had some stuff for me. I work for Mr. Top. I gotta have it. Now."

"I . . . I can't get it. They've got it locked up. There's a man in the room all the time. It's impossible."

"You show me where the room is. I'll help you. Come on. Let's get out of here."

Rex couldn't think. What cold he do?

Nelson took a small gun out of his pocket. "Move, Buster. Check the hall and see if it's clear."

Rex looked out of the door. The hall was empty.

"It's clear."

"Okay, I'm going to get up on this bed. You put the sheet over me so my coat is covered. And my shoes. I'll have this gun aimed right at your stomach. Now. Okay. Push me out, and take me to the drug room. Walk at the side down near my feet. That way I can see you all the time."

Rex opened the door and prayed that the X-ray technician would be in the hall. But the hall was empty.

Rex walked as slowly as he dared, hoping that Fay or Dr. Cramer would come into the hall and stop him. But he got to the end where there was an outside door. He pushed the bed through and headed for the main building.

As he went along, he hoped someone would stop him and ask him why he was taking a patient outside at this hour. But no one was around.

He got to the main building. He opened the big glass doors and pulled the bed through. Nelson saw the bright light in the information office.

"Keep away from that desk. If they try to stop us, keep moving."

Rex pushed the bed to the elevator. He hoped they would have to wait for a car. No such luck. A car was right there, ready.

Rex pulled the bed into the elevator. He pushed the button for the basement, and the doors closed softly.

"Be careful, now, Buster. Don't try to get smart."

The elevator stopped and the doors opened. Rex pulled the bed out and headed for the drug room.

How had he ever gotten himself in such a mess? He was being used. Nobody had ever shoved Rex around and gotten away with it. But they were shoving him around now. His old friends. Some friends.

Nelson saw the sign of the drug room on the door. "Okay, kid. This is fine. Stop the cart. I'll walk now."

Rex held the cart, and Nelson tossed back the sheet and got off. He put the gun into his pocket, but he kept his hand in the pocket, too.

"What do you do?" Nelson asked.

"Just knock on the door."

"Okay, Buster. Knock."

Rex didn't move. There was a little motion of the man's pocket where the gun was.

"I'm not playing games, Sonny. Move!"

Rex knocked on the door. In a moment it opened.

"Hi, Rex," the drug man said. "What can I do for you?"

Before Rex could answer anything, Nelson stepped behind him and shoved him into the room.

"Hey, what–"

"Just relax, Buddy, and nothing will happen to you."

The man stared at Nelson and the gun which was now out of his pocket.

"Rex, take this tape and fix his mouth so he can't yell." Nelson handed a roll of sticky adhesive tape to Rex. "Tape his hands and feet, too. Move!"

When that was done, Nelson checked to see if Rex had done it right. "Good. Now smash the glass in that case, and let's get the stuff and get out of here. I ain't got all night."

Rex kicked the glass with the heel of his shoe. It broke with a crash.

"You fool!" Nelson hit Rex across the face with his hand. "You didn't have to make it that loud. Now get over there by that guy and lie down. If you move, I'll kill you."

Rex went over and lay down on the floor. His mind was whirling like mad. What could he do? How could he stop this Nelson guy?

Nelson was putting stuff into a plastic bag he had brought with him. Rex watched him. He sure was a big guy.

Wait a minute, thought Rex. I wonder if his name is really Nelson. Of course not. He wouldn't use his real name. Could this be Mr. Top himself? Rex decided to find out.

"Hey, Mr. Top!" Rex said.

Nelson's head came up. "What?"

"You're Mr. Top!"

"Yeah, so what?"

"Is that your real name? Top?"

"Yeah, Topham, but they call me Top. Now shut up."

The drug-room man was staring at Rex. Rex suddenly remembered what Fay had said the night that girl died. She hated the guys that sold drugs to kids. Now she would hate Rex. He had to stop Mr. Top. But how?

Rex looked around. Then he noticed that a piece of glass from the broken door of the drug case was lying near his head. Slowly, Rex began to move nearer to it. By the time he had moved to where the glass was by his ear, the big man was finished. The plastic bag was full of little bottles, packets and boxes.

"All right, Buster. You get up now."

Rex rolled over and as he got up, he put his hand over the piece of glass. When he was on his feet, the glass was in his hand.

"We'll just leave the guy here. He'll be all right. By the time he talks to the police, we'll be gone, far, far away. Dugan and the boys are waiting in the car."

With his gun in his pocket, Mr. Top pushed Rex along in front of him out into the hall. Mr. Top told Rex to close the door of the drug room behind them.

CHAPTER 8

Leaving the drug room, Rex and Mr. Top walked down the hospital hall the way they had come in. As they passed by the cart they had left in the hall, Rex made his move.

Rex stopped and took two steps back. Mr. Top turned to see what Rex was doing. Rex grabbed the end of the cart. The cart moved easily on swivel wheels and Rex shoved it up against Top's stomach hard enough to knock the wind out of him for a minute.

Mr. Top's right hand came out of his pocket in an automatic effort to push the cart away. That left the gun in the pocket. Top's left hand held the plastic bag. When the cart hit him, the bag fell onto the top of the cart. Rex leaned on the cart holding it against Top as hard as he could with his body, while he used the piece of glass to cut the plastic bag.

The bag fell open and all the drugs spilled out onto the cart.

Rex swept them off with his arm, spilling and scattering them as they fell to the hard floor. Some of the little bottles broke and liquid spilled onto the floor. Pills and packets of drugs flew everywhere.

Mr. Top caught his breath and saw what had happened to the drugs in the same moment.

"You lousy little fink!" Top's eyes were like hard steel.

Rex threw all of his weight against the cart, trying to keep Mr. Top pinned against the wall. But a hundred extra pounds of weight and the power of a trained weight lifter were too much to hold back.

Rex felt Top pushing against the cart. Rex didn't want to get pinned to the other wall with the cart, so he let go suddenly and ducked down under the cart. As it went over his head, Rex made a dive for Top's legs.

The two men fell to the floor. Rex tried to get some kind of hold on the big man, but in a moment Top had pinned Rex down. Then Top took out the gun. He hit Rex on the head twice, and then everything went dark for Rex.

When Rex came to, he felt a terrible pain in his head. He didn't move, hoping it would go away. Then he realized that he was lying on the floor. He remembered Mr. Top! Where was he?

Rex listened. He heard someone moving. He opened his eyes carefully. Mr. Top was there! Then he must have only blacked out for a few seconds.

Rex tried to see what Top was doing. He was kneeling on the floor! He was picking up the drugs that were still good.

Then behind Mr. Top at the end of the hall, Rex saw two men in uniform. The hospital security guards!

"Get your hands in the air!" one of the guards said.

Rex saw Mr. Top jump. He had been so busy with his little pills that he hadn't heard a thing. Now he turned around with a look of complete surprise on his face.

"Come on. Get up. Keep your hands high." The other guard came up and found Top's gun. He took the gun, and it seemed to Rex that Mr. Top seemed to shrink a little. He didn't look as big anymore.

"What did you do to the orderly?" The guard moved his big service pistol as if he felt like using it.

Mr. Top put his hands higher. "I didn't kill him. He's just knocked out." Mr. Top's voice had a new sound. There was a little note of panic in it.

Rex tried to sit up. One of the guards came and helped him to his feet.

"Are you okay, kid?"

"I think so," Rex said. The guard helped him walk over to Mr. Top. Rex saw that there was sweat on Mr. Top's forehead. So when things get tight, even big guys sweat. Somehow it made Rex feel good to know that. Nobody is *really* cool, then. Nobody, that is, except the guy with nothing to worry about.

"How did you find out about this?" Rex asked.

"Well, the drug-room phone line came open and all the operator could hear was some funny kind of mumbling."

"Hey, that's right. The guy is all taped up." Rex went into the drug room. He found some scissors in the desk and cut the tapes off the man.

"Thanks. I thought I'd have to wear that tape forever."

They walked back into the hall. "Well, you got him. That's great!"

"Sure, the operator has standing orders that when anything at all is funny about the drug room, she sends for us right away. Your getting to the phone gave us the clue. Are you okay?"

"Yes, but this young fellow had quite a scrap with him. You know who he is, don't you, Rex?"

"Yes, his name is Topham. He's got some guys waiting outside for him. You might be able to nab them, too. They're all pushers."

One of the guards went to the drug room to phone the police.

Top glared at Rex. "You lousy fink!" Topham said.

Rex didn't get a chance to tell Top off. Fay and Dr.

Cramer came into the hall.

Fay looked at Rex. "We know all about it, Rex. Mugsy told us."

"Mugsy? How did you know about him?"

Dr. Cramer smiled. "When you and Mr. Nelson here disappeared from the X-ray room, bed and all, we got in touch with your brother. He told us you had a friend in the hospital, a patient in his building. We checked on the newest patients and found Mugsy among them. When we told him you were missing, he told us about Mr. Top and the plan about the drug room."

Rex looked at Fay. He swallowed hard. "But it was my idea in the first place. I really was going to do it, but then, after I got to working here, I don't know . . . I felt different. I can't explain it."

"You don't have to," Fay said softly. "The point is, you changed your mind. And you didn't let this kind of guy push you around. That's all that matters."

"Well, come on, you." The guard motioned to Topham. "The police will have your buddies in a couple of minutes, so we'll let them take you along, too."

Fay looked at Rex.

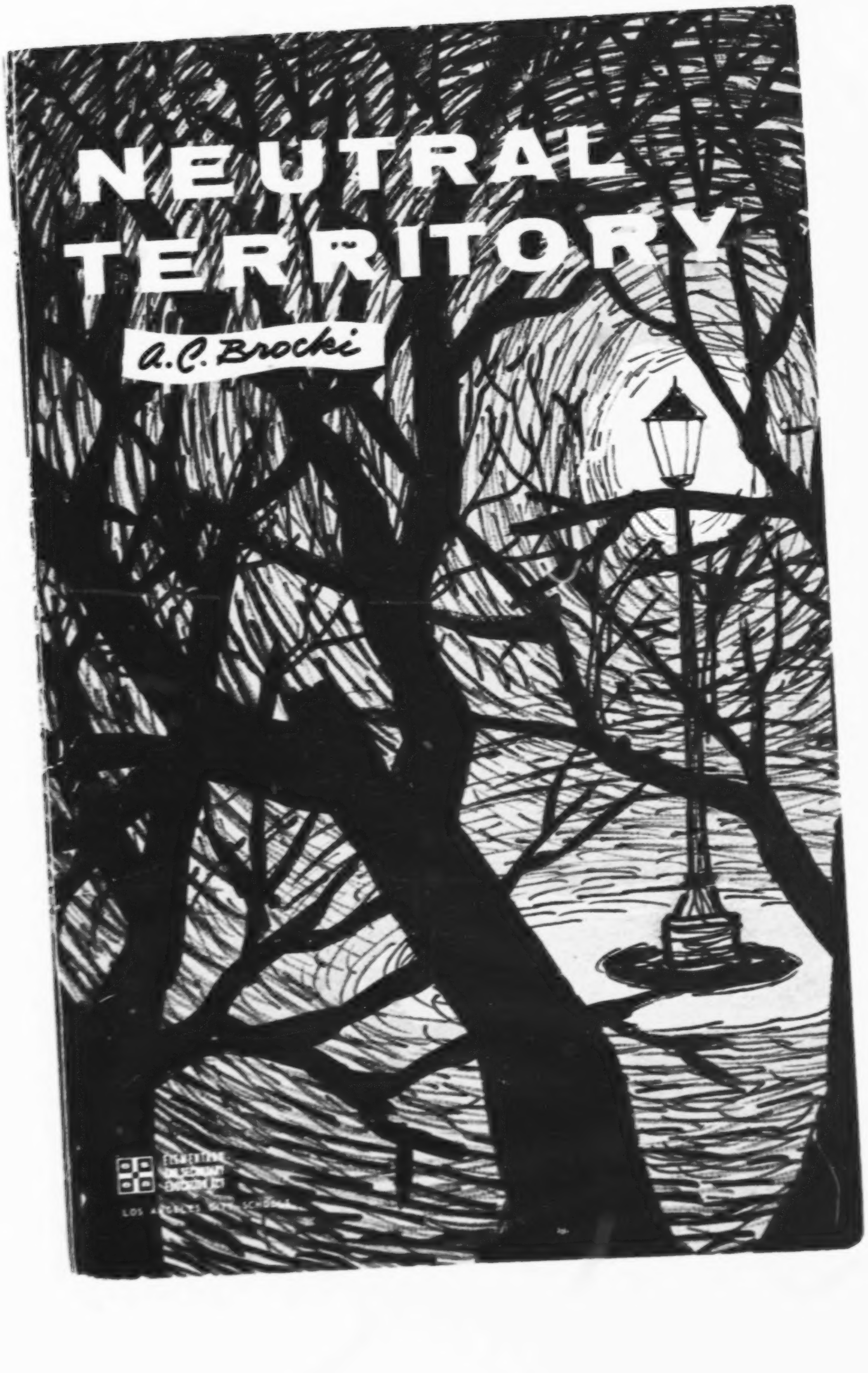
"Just a little bump on the head, that's all," Rex said.

Well, you just come over to emergency, and let us see that bump."

Rex grinned to see her suddenly become the cool, efficient nurse again. In spite of the pain in his head, Rex felt good. He had lived through Thursday, and as he had figured, from now on things were going to be all right.

Rex watched them taking Mr. Top away, and for some reason he thought of the dead girl who held his hand so hard. It didn't make him feel so bad to think of her now. Things seemed to be sort of evened up.

"Okay," he said, "I'm all yours, Nurse."



NEUTRAL TERRITORY

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LOS ANGELES CITY SCHOOLS

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NEUTRAL TERRITORY

CHAPTER 1

Richard looked at the jagged line of restless, wordless shoppers standing behind their carts. They all moved their bodies in small ways, showing without words that they were in a hurry. Even an old woman, with a face lined like a raisin and her head shawl-covered for church, leaned out of line to see what was holding things up.

They all had someplace to go and someone waiting for them, Richard thought. All he had were places not to go and people not to see. He would be stuck in the market until six o'clock, filling paper bags with other people's food and pushing overloaded carts out to other people's cars.

It would be dark by six. He would again have to wait inside the well-lighted market until he saw his bus arrive. Then he would sprint for the bus so that lurking members of the Jockeys couldn't get him. That first Saturday Richard worked, Stump, a short boy dressed in hip-tight khakis, had given a silent warning. He stood outside the market window and stared until he was sure that Richard saw him. No doubt, Stump reported immediately to Joe Jackson and other members of the Jockeys that someone from another gang was working in their territory.

Even the bus would have to be checked. Richard would look at all the passengers while he paid his fare. Then he would pick a seat halfway between the front door and the rear door, never at the rear of the bus. The walk from the bus stop to his house could be dangerous, too. The only safe place would be home where he would slump down on the sofa and watch the rest of whatever was tuned in on TV.

The conveyor belt began to move again. Richard was glad not to have time to think. Like a skilled juggler, he snatched the smaller articles from the counter well, snapped them to his left hand, held just above the opened bag, and lowered them swiftly into the bag. He enjoyed looking up every now and then at nervous customers who obviously expected him to fumble a throw and smash their jar of mayonnaise or splat their ripe avocado.

The manager grunted as he swung his right leg over the low chrome railing behind Richard. "How you like working Sundays?" the manager asked.

Richard nodded without looking up.

"You're faster than the others," the manager continued. "That's why I picked you for the extra time."

Richard faked a smile but remained silent. It was uncomfortable listening to the manager, or to any older people, for that matter. They always seemed to be putting on an act to hide their fear and anger.

"If you keep working fast, you can work every Sunday," the manager said. "Counting the two hours after school every day and Saturdays, that'll give you over twenty-five hours a week. You'll be driving to work in a purple Jaguar before you know it."

Richard faked another smile and waited for the real reason behind the conversation. In three weeks of working at the market, he had learned that the manager always had a hidden reason when he spoke, no matter how friendly he tried to be.

"Why don't you take a short lunch when you finish bagging this one," the manager said finally, "and I'll see about letting you off early one of these nights."

"OK," Richard said flatly. Probably some of the boxboys hadn't shown up and the manager was out to get more work without fattening any paychecks. No doubt the manager would make the same speech to another boxboy down the line.

CHAPTER 2

Reaching back to untie his pale green, knee-length apron, Richard suddenly changed his mind. It would be safer to wear the apron. On the three Saturdays he had worked, he walked two blocks south for lunch at a hamburger stand in his own territory. But that stand wasn't open Sundays, and he would have to risk eating lunch in the Jockeys' territory. The apron might make them realize he was working, not cruising or scouting for a rumble.

Richard was sorry he had not crossed to the park at the first traffic signal, for ahead he could see men dressed in black, standing in a few small groups on the church steps. He didn't like funerals. They always made him wonder how old the person in the casket was. Old people didn't matter. They had lived their lives and were tired anyway. But young people were different. It was unfair to strike them down before they had lived enough to be tired.

As he approached the church, he looked toward the park to shut out the sad faces. Then he heard strained laughter coming from some group on the steps. Were they laughing at him? He looked quickly toward the church. The men, dressed in Sunday suits, looked at one another with fixed smiles, as if the suits had stiffened their faces. They were all too old to be members of an active gang. At least they were not attending a funeral, Richard thought. Maybe a christening or a wedding.

Richard felt safer once he had reached the lunch stand in the park. All local gangs had formally agreed not to fight in the park because the Center sponsored weekly dances that everyone wanted to go to. Of course, he wasn't sure that the agreement still held, since he was out of touch, but it was safer to be out in the open rather than trapped inside a cafe.

He cleaned off the crumb-covered redwood bench, not wanting to dirty the seat of his still-fresh tan Levi's. Then he started eating his hamburger and drinking his coke as rapidly as possible. The kids standing in line ahead of him, arguing about what ice cream bar and what drink to get, had made him late.

Between bites and swallows, he looked at the people in the park. Mostly there were kids running or crawling around aimlessly, with some mothers and fathers stretched out separately on the grass like corpses, apparently trying to sleep. Here and there were young couples, alive and as close together as they could be.

At a table across from him sat one couple almost his own age, with their backs to him. Twice, the boy put his arm around the girl's shoulder. Twice, she pulled away and moved farther down the bench. One more move and she would fall from the bench. Richard wanted to stay to see what would happen, but the second he put the last bite of hamburger into his mouth, he got up from the bench and hurried toward the market, the same way he had come.

Just before he reached the church, someone on the steps shouted, "Here they come!" Instantly, the people on the steps formed two solid lines from the church to the flower-decorated car parked at the curb, blocking Richard's way. He could have gone around by the street, but he was attracted by the excitement of the scene.

The bride lifted her white satin dress slightly as she came down the steps cautiously in her needle heels. With her left arm held up gracefully, she pretended to fend off rice and twirls of colored paper ribbons hurled joyously by the crowd. Behind the couple came the bridesmaids—Richard was suddenly a complete captive of the scene. The smallest of the bridesmaids was someone he was sure he knew, but he couldn't remember from where.

Three of the bridesmaids went down the steps part way with the couple. The smallest one stayed at the top, smiling through tears, reaching over and over into her small satin purse, throwing a few grains of rice, which fell and scattered just a few steps below. Her hand never went higher than the small circle of peach-colored satin and veil on the crown of her head, but the action of throwing her arm forward made her firm body give curving highlights to her peach-colored satin dress. The swirls of dark, shining hair and the high cheekbones were almost familiar, but Richard still could not place her.

The bride reached the car, turned toward the bridesmaids, and threw her bouquet. The one at the top did not try for the bouquet. Instead, she raised both hands to her face in an expression of unbearable excitement. When she saw who caught the bouquet, she gave a little cry of delight which Richard recognized immediately.

Of course. It was that once-shapeless little girl in junior high school, the one who was always in the crowd when he was playing on a team. Whenever he scored a point or just made a good play, he would look over at the bleachers, and there she would be, the tips of her fingers still touching her cheekbones. And when the action was all complete, out would come that little cry of delight.

As soon as the groom got into the car, the lines broke up, the younger men running to their cars to honk the couple through town. Mary–that was her name–Mary Olson, Richard suddenly remembered. They had never had classes together because she was at least a year below him. In fact, they had never really talked. He had come to look upon her merely as a good luck sign at sports events.

Then, graduating students who lived to the south of the junior high went on to Adams High School, while those to the north went to McKinley High School. She probably went to McKinley, Richard thought. That's why he never saw her again.

The honking procession started down the street. People standing in front of the church waved. The three bridesmaids turned to re-enter the church. Mary was sobbing and dabbing her eyes with a handkerchief to keep her makeup from running down her face. The first bridesmaid to reach the top of the steps put a comforting arm around Mary and guided her back into the church.

Richard felt empty all of a sudden. He wanted to dash up the steps and into the church before Mary got away, just to see if she remembered him. But that would be silly. She was too occupied now with other feelings to remember him. Besides, he thought of his clothes and realized how he would look going into church in an apron. Instead, he made his way through the few groups of people who were still standing on the sidewalk and headed for work.

CHAPTER 3

All afternoon, no matter how fast he worked, Richard couldn't stop thinking about Mary. Over and over he saw her at the top of the church steps. What if she didn't go to McKinley? he wondered. What if she moved out of town several years ago and just came back for the wedding? Then he might never be able to find her. He threw the cans of food to his left hand with greater speed to stop thinking.

Working faster was useless. Finally Richard realized that he had wanted to be the one at the top of the steps to comfort Mary. Putting his arm around her shoulders and kissing her temples gently would be actions that would take away the emptiness he felt.

He would find her somehow. It wouldn't be hard. Even if she had moved out of town, the priest would know the name of the married couple, and certainly the bride would know the whereabouts of her own bridesmaids. Or he could go up to McKinley before work and ask some of the kids if Mary went there. He might even look up her number in the telephone book.

In the late afternoon, business in the market slowed down. The manager's head could no longer be seen through the small balcony window that overlooked the market floor. All of the workers knew that he was slumped over his desk taking his afternoon nap. He left the fluorescent lights on in his office to make everyone think he was working at his books. It was a time for the checkers and the boxboys to take long breaks or to work slowly until the lights in the office went out.

Richard used the manager's nap time to slip out of the market to the telephone booth in the parking lot. In the telephone book he found five columns of people named Olson or Olsen. He had no idea what her father's first name was. He didn't bother to count the names. It would take too long to call all of those numbers.

At six o'clock Richard didn't wait inside the market for the bus to come. He walked straight out to the bus stop and waited with a few other people. He had more important things to think about now. At home he ate a silent dinner, which his sister had kept warm for him. After dinner he didn't join the other members of the family at television. Instead, he went to the small house in back, where his married brother lived.

"You don't have to be at work until eight," Richard said to his brother. "I can have your car back here by six-thirty tomorrow night. It's really important, or I wouldn't ask you."

Richard stood in the doorway of the narrow bathroom while, inside, his brother finished shaving for the night shift at the bakery. "Those are brand new seat covers," his brother said angrily. "I don't want you picking up a bunch of hoods and spilling wine all over the seats."

"It's not for cruising," Richard protested. "I need it for just about an hour to find a friend. Most of the time it'll be sitting on the market parking lot, right where I can keep an eye on it." He continued to protest quietly until his brother gave in.

CHAPTER 4

As soon as his last class was over on Monday, Richard hurried home. Keeping his promise not to wake his brother, Richard opened the door of the car quietly and slipped into the driver's seat. Holding the door with his hand, he pushed in the clutch and let the car roll out to the street before starting the engine and slamming the door.

Fifteen minutes before the last class ended, Richard entered the Attendance Office at McKinley High.

"Can you tell me where Mary Olson is this period?" he asked confidently. He saw quickly that the pale-skinned old man behind the high yellow-oak counter would not hand out that kind of information freely. "I'm her brother," Richard lied quickly. "My mother wanted me to pick her up for a dentist's appointment."

The man looked hard into Richard's eyes as if he had some special power to see truth. The old fake. Richard did not flinch.

"You go to this school?" the man asked.

Richard shook his head. "Catholic school," he lied again. Why couldn't the old fool just give the room number without throwing his weight around?

The man started to spin the circular file of girls' programs. "I'll give you the room number," he said, "but then you'll have to get a visitor's pass from the Boys' VP."

Richard asked a girl where Room 115 was, and he went straight there rather than be questioned again to get a visitor's pass. He got that empty feeling in the stomach as he waited in the hall outside of Room 115.

Mary came out talking with another girl and did not see Richard. She looked as pretty as she had the day before, though a little younger in a skirt and low-heeled shoes. She wore a white silk blouse with frills at her wrists and around the V-shaped neck. A small gold cross lay flat against the smooth skin of her chest.

Richard caught up with them before they got to the main door. "Do you remember me?" he asked, tapping Mary on the shoulder.

Mary swung around. The books cradled in her arms across her chest prevented her from raising her hands to her face, but the expression of delight in her eyes and around her mouth were the same. "Oh!" she breathed. Then she cast her eyes down and blushed.

"We went to junior high together," Richard said, trying to make her remember.

Mary nodded her head in agreement, finally looking up into his face.

"See you later," her friend said when they reached the main door. She scurried off after giving Mary's arm a tight squeeze for joy.

"I remember you," Mary said. "You pitched against McKinley at the last baseball game."

"Were you in the stands for that game?" he asked.

"I've been to all your games," she said without shyness.

"I knew I was lucky that day," he said.

They walked together for a full ten minutes without knowing where they were going or where they had been. Stopped by a locked gate, they stood looking at each other, saying little. Suddenly Mary realized that she would be late for work.

"I'll drive you," Richard said. "I have a car right out in front."

Mary waited until Richard got in on the other side of the car. Then she slid over close to him. "What does that say?" she asked, pointing to some writing on the windshield on the passenger's side.

Richard cocked his head to look at the writing. The slant and the flourishes of the two words were distinctive, even though from the inside of the car the writing appeared backwards. The writing had been done with a broad felt-tipped pen. "It says 'The Jockeys,' " he said to her simply.

He drove Mary to where she worked, a variety store two blocks north of the park. Before she hurried from the car, Richard kissed her softly on the fragrant temple, just ahead of and above her ear. He did not feel empty for the rest of the day.

CHAPTER 5

On Thursday afternoon Mary was not smiling when she came out of class.

"I planned to come yesterday and the day before," Richard said, "but my brother needed his car."

"You must not come here anymore," she said.

He could tell from the way she spoke that she was worried, not angry. "What's the matter?" he asked.

Mary hung her head as if she were afraid to speak. "Joe Jackson stopped me in the hall today," she said finally. "He's one of the leaders of the Jockeys."

"I know who he is all right," Richard said explosively. "Did he touch you?"

Mary shook her head. "Are you a member of any gang at Adams?" she asked, as if she wanted the answer to be "No."

"I used to go around with one," Richard said, "but I stopped seeing them as much when I got on the baseball team. The guys in the gang don't consider me an active member anymore, but nobody ever really gets out of a gang."

"Let's go to the car," Mary said. "I'm afraid for you here."

Again, someone had written "The Jockeys" on the windshield of the car, this time in slightly larger letters. Richard had to wash the earlier ones off with soap and water before returning the car. He was angry at having to do it again.

"Joe has some crazy idea that he is my protector," Mary said as they drove. "He said that he didn't want to see me going around with the wrong people. I think he has that short boy watching me."

Richard parked just beyond the variety store and put his arm around Mary. For a few moments he said nothing. Then he put his left hand under her chin, turning her face toward his.

"It's all my fault," he said. "I never should have taken a job out of my own territory." He looked at her eyes carefully for the first time and saw how long and perfectly shaped her eyelashes were. He smiled as he spoke again. "But if I hadn't taken the job, I might not have seen you again. Any danger is worth that."

He leaned forward and touched his lips to her left eyebrow. They both sighed deeply.

"May I drive you home after work?" he asked.

The worried look returned to Mary's face, and she protested that her house would be just as dangerous as school.

"How about staying here after work?" he asked. "We could walk over to the park. They wouldn't bother us there."

Mary explained regretfully that during the week she had to cook dinner for her family. Before she got out of the car, they hastily agreed to meet in the park for lunch on Saturday, since they both worked all day.

Shortly after twelve o'clock on Saturday Richard saw Mary through the trees, walking diagonally across the park from work. He reached the cafe before she did, and he got in line at the take-out window. He waved hello to her as she approached and motioned for her to get an empty table out under a leaf-bare elm tree.

Only a week ago he sat at a table alone and looked longingly at some of the other people. Now here he was close to Mary, their bodies touching, his arm around her curved-in waist. He had thought it would be hard to know what to say. He didn't need words. Just to be with her, to watch an impossible blue sky through black bones of trees, to feel the warmth of her body close to his, was enough for him. The time was almost over before they knew it.

"There's a dance here tonight," Richard said. "Can you come right after work?"

Mary would have to telephone her sister to meet them there. That way she was sure that her father would let her go, and Richard would not risk getting caught deep in the territory walking her home.

Richard carried their waste paper to a chipped yellow can chained to a deeply wrinkled tree and then walked a way with Mary.

"Don't come any farther," she begged.

"It's safe as long as I stay in the park," he said. "The gangs made an agreement a long time ago that this park is neutral territory."

Just before they reached the sidewalk, Richard swung himself in front of Mary and crossed his wrists in the curve of her back. Mary went up on her toes as she reached for his lips. Their lips touched like a whisper. Then she dropped her head sideways against his chest. They stood for several seconds with their bodies flat against one another, both gazing blankly in different directions.

Suddenly Richard felt uneasy. Something out there beyond him was wrong. The bare trees, the cafe, the table where they sat—all came into focus. Someone was watching them. There, by the cafe he stood, watching quietly as he had watched through the market window that first Saturday. It was Stump again, giving his second silent warning.

Richard did not trouble Mary with what he saw, because it might keep her from going to the dance. He walked her to the edge of the park and then started back the way he had come.

It would take Stump and at least three others to corner him in the open park in the daylight, Richard thought. And if they were planning to jump him, Stump probably wouldn't have shown himself. Just the same, Richard made wide sweeps around the cafe and the Center building. Stump was not to be seen.

CHAPTER 6

At five-thirty the rubber whine of the traffic outside the market grew louder, and the street lights came on. Richard looked through the window to the park where the lights along the paths and in front of the Center made flat circles of brightness on the ground. In less than thirty minutes he would have several hours to spend with Mary.

At five minutes to six Richard went back to the employees' room to comb his hair, just right. He shaped the knot of his tie. He had managed not to get his shirt and pants dirty during the day. They would have to do for the evening. He dusted his black leather ankle boots with a dry paper towel and took one final look at his combed hair.

He felt emptiness again as he waited at the signal. But the emptiness would be gone as soon as he held Mary close to him again.

He crossed the street and started to walk through the park diagonally. When he reached the corner of the darkened cafe, he saw Mary ahead, walking along the sidewalk with a man. Maybe her sister couldn't come, and a brother came instead, Richard thought. Or maybe she was afraid to walk in the park after dark and had asked someone from work to walk with her. Richard could see that they were talking rapidly.

Something was wrong. Mary was shaking her head too violently. At the edge of one of the flat circles of brightness made by a street light, the man grabbed Mary's arm and started to pull her toward the street.

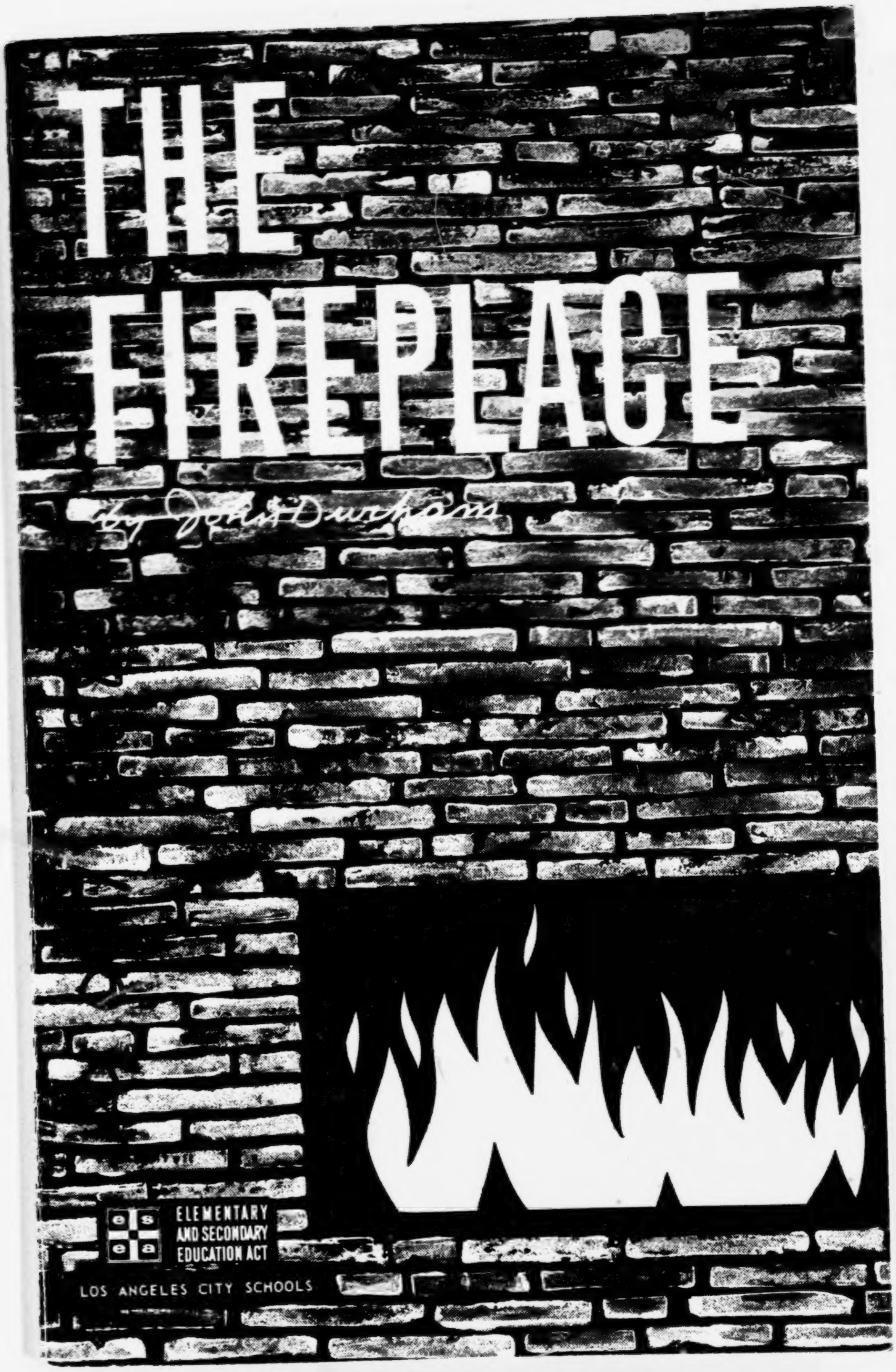
Richard recognized the man's features in the street light. It was Joe Jackson. Richard's legs exploded into action the way they did when he hit a ball in a game. If he could take Joe by surprise, Joe wouldn't have a chance to flick out a knife.

By the time Richard neared the edge of the park, Joe had pulled Mary halfway across the street. The sound of Richard's pounding feet made her turn her head and look back at the park. "No!" she screamed when she saw the trap. Her warning was too late.

As Richard dashed between two parked cars, Stump sprang out from behind a car and crouched in the open space like a wrestler ready for battle. The street light flashed for an instant along the slim blade of his knife, held in front of him like a sword.

Richard had no chance to slow down or turn aside. The sharp point entered his chest. His speed drove the blade deep into his body. He fell forward over Stump and rolled onto his back into the middle of the street. Mary wailed a long cry of pain when his body came to rest and he did not move. Stump and the knife vanished in the dark, beyond the reaches of the street light.

Mary tore her arm away from Joe's grasp and rushed to the middle of the street. She fell to her knees by Richard's head. His face looked gray and lifeless under the street light. She leaned over and felt for his breath with her cheek. None came. Gently, she covered his face with her hands and looked up at the dark sky. "They wouldn't let me learn to love you again," she moaned. Then she rocked to and fro on her knees, like a woman who could not hold back her grief.



THE FIREPLACE

by John Durham

ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION ACT

LOS ANGELES CITY SCHOOLS

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THE FIREPLACE

CHAPTER 1

"The mud's too dry," the stonemason said to Henry. "You put too much dye in it." He held up fingers on which he balanced some of the black mortar. "How come you're so dumb?"

"Look," Henry said, "I didn't ask for this job. You asked me. Remember?"

"Who else was there? There wasn't anyone else," the mason said. "Look, dummy, mix in some more sand and a little more cement. And some more water. So it's good and mushy. But not too wet."

"Maybe you better mix it."

Hard rain beat on the big windows of the living room. Above the fireplace opening were two-by-fours with wire mesh stretched between them. Henry hadn't even seen the woman whose fireplace they were rebuilding. He knew she had money, that was all. The mason was building a slate fireplace for her. And that took money.

"I hired you to mix the mud," the mason said, "and to bring me the slate."

"I told you I didn't know anything about it," Henry said. "Didn't I?"

"Boy," the mason said. He looked up at the framework of wood and the wire mesh. "A smart kid I need like I need a broken arm."

"I'm not being smart," Henry said. "I mean I don't know how to do what you want."

The mason was a thin, little guy, smaller than Henry. He had black, curly hair and a face like a boxer's, though he didn't look like a boxer otherwise. He looked beat-up, but he didn't have a boxer's easy movements. He didn't have a boxer's power. His fingers trembled as he held up the mortar on the big trowel. "Okay," he said, "I'll come out and show you again."

Outside, in the garage, they worked in the half-light of the open overhead door. Rain gusted furiously down onto the driveway and the roof of the garage. "Look, kid," the mason said, "now watch me this time, so I don't have to show you again. Never mind the rain. It don't need your help. It's doing all right by itself."

He took three shovels of sand and one of cement and tossed them into the wheelbarrow. Then he ran out into the rain and turned the hose on at the faucet. "Don't run the water in yet," he yelled to Henry. "Let me show you."

Sure, Henry thought. I'll wait. It made him nervous. The mason was kind of odd. The guy just made him nervous, being around him. Hands shaking and all that.

"Now, look," the mason said. He had run a little water into the wheelbarrow full of mortar. He mixed it with a hoe. "See?" he said. "Just like that. Nice and wet without falling apart. That's how mud has to be."

"How come you call it mud?"

"Jeez, what a question. How do I know how come it's mud? Why do they call a horse a horse? Because they do." The mason wiped his hand, covered with black mortar, across his face. A black smudge ran from his cheekbone to his chin. "Why that woman wants black mortar is beyond me," he said. "Why couldn't she go for regular mortar?"

"I guess she thought black would look better with that slate," Henry said.

"I didn't ask you. Look. You wheel this stuff in and make sure you stay on the dropcloths. Right?"

"Sure. How much you paying me?"

"I told you. A buck seventy-five."

"Yeah." It wasn't much. Henry knew that. He also knew this guy was probably not licensed. He didn't know how he knew. He just knew. There was something sneaky and shaky about the guy. Henry was sorry he'd left the poolhall for this job. He could be shooting a little eight-ball with Rosey, or one of the other guys. Saturday was no time to work.

He didn't know why he had come with this mason. The guy came into the poolhall, looking shaky and kind of scared, and he looked around. Henry sat on a bench, back behind the snooker table, just hanging around. Too early for anybody to be in, except he had to get up early to drive his mother to work at the hospital. That was the only reason he was here.

So the guy, this mason, offered him a job. And Henry only had seventy-five cents in his pocket, just enough for a few games. So he came. It was getting near Christmas and he had no present for his mother yet. He could make fourteen dollars in one day, enough for a day of pool and a pretty good present.

Henry wheeled the mortar along the sidewalk and in through the front door. Then he wheeled it along the hall and into the living room.

"You're about the slowest guy I ever saw," the mason said. He had told Henry his name, but Henry had forgotten it.

"I didn't tell you I was fast," Henry said. This guy was worse than Old Man Pratt, his math teacher. Old Man Pratt shook, too. His hand rattled the chalk on the board when he wrote equations. Henry's old man was like that, before he died, all shaky and sick-looking. This mason looked sort of like Henry's old man, the way he shook and the color of his face. His face was gray and thin looking. His eyes were too bright. Henry's old man had looked like that.

"You got to stay off the carpet," the mason said. He was throwing mortar up against the wire mesh with the big trowel. "This carpet cost somebody several dollars a yard. I don't want to have to replace it."

"You ought to have more of this canvas," Henry said. "I didn't see that gap between the pieces."

"She'll love that black tire track on that gold carpet," the mason said. "God, I'm already losing money on this job. What made me take on a slate job? I must of been drunk."

Maybe that was why his hands shook. Maybe he was a drunk. He was kind of odd and shaky, but he threw the mortar up just right. Henry never had even watched a mason before. But he could tell the guy knew what he was doing. He threw a big blob of the mortar up there on the wire mesh. Then he spread it with a trowel and it stayed. He did it neat and quick.

"Don't just stand there with your mouth hanging open," the mason said. "Go mix another batch of mud."

By the middle of the afternoon Henry was covered with the black dye he used in the mortar. His clothes were soaked with rain. His arms and shoulders ached from mixing the mortar and wheeling it into the living room. A dollar seventy-five an hour! Two or three more batches of the stuff and he'd drop dead on the wet sidewalk.

And he was tired of having the guy gripe at him all the time. He hadn't mixed a batch of mortar right all day. He had smeared the carpet. He had put black handprints on the blue front door. It made him nervous to be told off like that, all day long.

"That's the last batch," the mason said. And, yeah, it was. The wire mesh was covered with a heavy coat of rough mortar. It ran from the fireplace opening, three feet off the floor, up to the high ceiling. Henry didn't know how it stayed there. It looked like it would plop out on the floor any second, the whole wall of gray mortar.

"What do we do now?" Henry said.

"I don't know about you," the mason said, "but I'm going home."

"Oh," Henry said, pleased. A little nervous too. It was true he kind of hated the guy. And the work was too hard for the money. But he wanted to come back tomorrow for some reason. He didn't know why. He hated the guy, but he wanted to come back. Why was that?

"You doing anything tomorrow?" the mason said.

"Most Sundays I go to church."

"That's great," the mason said. "You think you'll go to hell if you miss a Sunday?"

Henry half grinned. "I don't guess so," he said. He was tickled that the guy wanted him again. That tickled him. He didn't know why.

"I don't know where I could get me somebody else," the mason said. He wasn't really talking to Henry. He was thinking out loud. "Not before tomorrow morning."

CHAPTER 2

The woman was one of those women in their thirties who still look like little girls, kind of. She had a soft, blonde little face and real blonde hair. She wore stretch pants and a tight sweater over a good figure. She was pretty, all right, but she was one of those quiet hellions.

"Just how," she said, "do you plan to get that black stuff off the carpet?"

"Oh," the mason said, "that comes right off. With a little suds and water. No problem." He had this possum grin on his face. Henry could tell the woman made him nervous. He kept wiping his mortar-covered hands on his pants, like he wanted real bad to be clean in front of this lady. But the pants were as black as his hands.

"I think I really want the other pattern," the woman said. "After thinking it over. It won't be too much trouble to take that down?"

"Oh, no. No, ma'am," Steve said, the mason. He had told Henry his name again this morning.

"I have to go out," the woman said. "I have some shopping. You'll close the door and lock it, if you leave."

"Women," the mason said. He watched the woman go out the front door before he said it. And he didn't say anything else. Just, "Women." Then he started taking down the two courses of greenish-black cut slate. Two hours' work. Henry could almost cry, just watching him. It took Steve a good ten minutes just to set one block of slate in there. He had to kind of hit between shakes of his hand, just to get it straight. Two hours' work. That was worth about nine dollars for Steve's pay and three-fifty that he'd have to pay Henry.

"You'll lose money, huh?" Henry said.

"Don't waste your time crying about it. Just get out there in the garage and get a broom and a shovel. Pick up this dry stuff. And bring me another batch of mud."

They went down to the country club for lunch. It was a private club, but there was no place else anywhere near. The woman's husband was a member, she said. And she'd call down to the man in the sandwich bar about them. It was all linoleum floor in there, she said. So their dirty shoes and clothes wouldn't matter. She made it pretty clear she didn't want Steve and Henry in her kitchen.

"Boy, she's a fussy broad," Henry said. They were sitting in the country club sandwich bar. The young guy behind the counter gave them two or three funny looks, when they ordered. He gave them two cold sandwiches each. Then he went back to staring out the window, where you could see the fairways and greens, the grass and the trees, bending under the heavy rain. It was all kind of gray and sad looking.

"You married?" Henry said to Steve.

"You writing a book?"

"Boy, you're a touchy guy," Henry said. "I just asked."

"I was married," Steve said. He was looking out at the rain, too. "But she got killed."

"Gee, I'm sorry," Henry said. He was sorry he even asked.

"Yeah," Steve said. His voice was low and bitter. It was like he was talking to the rain out there, instead of to Henry. "She was a sweet girl. That woman up there"—he waved toward the house where they were working—"she couldn't hold a candle to Sue Mary." He turned around and put his face almost up against Henry's face. "You know how she got killed?"

Henry pulled back six inches. He shook his head. It startled him, the way Steve looked, his eyes somehow bright and dull at the same time. His head–Steve's–quivered on his thin neck. "This drunk, this nutty drunk, ran into her with a motorcycle. That's how. He didn't have any insurance," Steve said. "And she left me with a little girl. The baby she was carrying was killed."

"Carrying?"

"Inside her. Yeah. Sue Mary," Steve said. "She was only twenty-five. Twenty-five years old."

The two of them sat there eating their sandwiches and looking out at the rain. A long line of cottonwoods, beyond the fairways, bent in the wet wind.

"My dad," Henry said finally, "he died last year."

"That right?"

"Yeah. Oh, he was kind of old. Fifty-eight."

"Heart?" Steve said.

"No, he had cancer. He used to play football at Santa Clara," Henry said. "Back in the thirties. He was quarterback."

"Me," Steve said, "I never even finished high school."

"I haven't finished yet," Henry said, wanting to be polite.

"There was a time," Steve said, "I could of finished that fireplace in one day. Oh, besides that first coat of mud. One day after that." He held up his hands. "Look at that," he said. "That all started after Sue Mary got hit by that nutty kid." He took a bite of his ham sandwich and talked while he chewed. "They won't even send the guy to jail," he said, "not the way they're talking."

"Maybe you heard of my old man," Henry said. "He was Little All-American back then."

Steve looked thoughtful. "Nah," he said, then, "I never paid any attention to football and that. Besides, I was just a little kid. I guess I look older," he said, almost shyly, "but I was only a little tiny kid back then." He looked directly at Henry for the first time since he came into the poolhall. "You must be a Catholic," he said. "Isn't Santa Clara a Catholic college?"

Henry grinned. "Yeah," he said, "we're Catholics. You ever hear of a Baptist named Padilla?"

"Nah," Steve said, looking out at the rain again, "they won't even send him to jail. He'll get probation or something."

"Guys like that," Henry said, "guys that drive around drunk. They ought to be whipped with clubs."

"Ah, maybe he was trying to forget something," Steve said. "But they ought to send him to jail. It's murder, pure and simple. Just like he had a gun aimed down that road."

"My dad," Henry said, "he'd be alive, too. Only this doctor didn't catch the cancer early enough. He thought it was gall bladder or something. Guys like that," he said, then stopped, not knowing what else to say.

CHAPTER 3

"I told you," the blonde woman said, "I told you before you started. I'm having this dinner party tomorrow night. You promised me before you started that you'd have the fireplace finished before then."

"Lady," Steve said, "I said I'd try." He spoke softly and shyly. He was almost like a boy. "But I just don't think I can–"

"It was part of the agreement," the woman said. "It's my husband's boss, at the hospital. We're having him and some others in to dinner. And the fireplace has to be finished."

"See," Steve said, "that facing that I took off. I thought there was solid brick behind it. But I had to spend a day filling in there. I don't make any money the way it is."

"I can't give you any more money. We agreed on a price."

"Sure," Steve said. "I know that. But, look–"

"You have to finish, that's all." She turned and went out, through the dining room and into the kitchen. It was getting late by then, almost five o'clock. And half the mortar remained empty of slate.

Steve looked up at the blank, dry, gray mortar, above him. "Jeez," he said. "I don't think I can do it." He had set two of the woman's lamps on the floor and taken off the shades, so he could see to do his work. Shadows slanted up his blackened face. The light threw an enormous shadow of him up against the white ceiling. He looked like a demon, newly created.

"Kid," he said.

"Yeah," Henry said.

"It'll maybe take us until ten, twelve o'clock tonight. You think you can make it?"

"I guess," Henry said. "I'll have to call my mother. Just to let her know."

"I'll make it two an hour," Steve said.

"Oh, no. No. Just leave it the way it is." Henry wanted to say, "Forget the money." But he didn't say it.

"I'll pay you what it's worth," Steve said. "Two an hour. Sure I will."

"Hell, man," Henry said. "You're already going broke."

"Don't waste your time crying about it," Steve said. "Go mix me a batch of mud. And cut a little thin piece of stone for that place up there. See it? Ten inches up. And two and three-quarters across. You think you can do it?"

"You mean with the electric saw?"

"I didn't mean with your teeth. Now get going."

CHAPTER 4

Henry was dizzy with weariness. His nose was stuffed with dry dust from the saw and the slate. He slumped against the wheelbarrow with his knees.

"Wouldn't you know it?" Steve said. "After that flat tire we had, too. Wouldn't you know we wouldn't have that one piece of rock?"

"Tell her what she can do with her dinner party," Henry said.

Steve turned and looked at him. "I made an agreement," he said. "I stick by what I say." He looked mad.

"Sure," Henry said. "I was just talking."

"You looked all over, out there?" Steve said. "You sure there isn't another long piece of slate?"

"I looked. I looked ten times."

"That pile of slate at the builder's place," Steve said. "It's just over the fence, isn't it? Right inside the fence?"

"They'd get you for burglary, if they caught you."

"If they caught me. Hell, I'll pay the guy in the morning."

"The cops would believe that, all right," Henry said. "They really would."

"I'll bet there's a piece out in that garage," Steve said. "I'll bet there is."

CHAPTER 5

"Just one piece of the long," Steve called through the fence. "That's all. Heist it up to the top of the fence."

Henry saw the headlights turn the corner, far down the street. "Watch it," he said. He saw Steve duck down to the alley, ten feet away, and hide behind a cluster of light poles. Then he ducked behind the low piles of slate. It wasn't a police car, though. It was some couple, driving along slow, making out while they drove. It made Henry a little mad to watch them go past. Here he was, committing a burglary, for what? For that blonde woman out there? For Steve? He didn't know for what. And there that guy was, driving back with his girl. It made him mad, real mad.

"Now," Steve said. "You get yourself back over here. And let's get back to the lady's house."

"Lady," Henry said. "She's no lady."

"The more lady they are, the harder they are," Steve said. "Didn't you know that?"

"No," Henry said. "I didn't."

"Well, you better believe it. Sue Mary was hard as nails."

They walked back down toward the car, where it was parked in the alley. Henry lugged the heavy piece of slate. "I better not drop this."

"You better believe that, too," Steve said. He hit Henry lightly on the shoulder.

"Hey, you'll make me drop it. What are you, crazy?" Then they both laughed.

CHAPTER 6

"There," Steve said. He pressed the last piece of slate into place. "You smooth off the joint, kid." He stood back, pressing his hands against his thighs so they wouldn't shake. "You can do that, can't you?"

"Yeah," Henry said. He had been watching all day. He knew he could do it. He took the little finishing tool and worked the mortar smooth in the joint.

The woman sat over on the couch and watched. She was in a fancy robe and her hair was done up in big, pink, plastic curlers.

"What are you doing about this mess?" she said. "I can't have a mess like that in here when–"

"I'll come out in the morning," Steve said. "I'll clean it all up. I can't clean up the slate tonight. It's got to set."

"Well, what about that black on my carpet?" the woman said.

"It'll come right out. With a little detergent suds."

The woman laughed thinly. "You think so?" She got up and went over and touched a dirty spot with her slippered toe. "*I* think you'll need a heavy cleaning machine," she said.

"You think so?" Steve said.

The woman laughed again. "I think so."

"Well, I'll bring one out."

"Boy," Henry said, shaking his head.

The woman and Steve turned to look at him. His tone of voice made them turn, he supposed. The woman looked surprised.

"Boy," Henry said, very politely, "you really know how to push a guy, lady."

"What?" the woman said.

"The poor guy's already losing money," Henry said. "Didn't you know that? Because of that extra day he had to put in?"

"Huh," the woman said. She turned back to Steve. "Just make sure that carpet is spotless," she said. "That's all." Then she went out.

"Listen, kid," Steve said, "you oughtn't to talk to a lady like that."

"Lady," Henry said flatly. "Sure, she is."

"She's got this nice house," Steve said. "I don't blame her."

"I guess," Henry said.

"Well, let's get the barrow cleaned out," Steve said.

"And let's wash off the hoe and all that."

"Sure."

"I guess you'll be going to school tomorrow."

"Yeah," Henry said.

"I couldn't afford to pay you, anyway."

"I'll take off," Henry said. "My mom won't care. And forget about the money," he added. He looked at Steve for a moment. Steve didn't say anything, but he was gray beneath the black dye on his face. "You just look awful tired," Henry said. "That's all."

"Don't waste any time crying over it," Steve said. "I'll make it. Now, let's clean up those tools."

The rain had cleared away when Steve drove Henry up to his house. A sickle moon hung over the avocado trees, back of Henry's house.

"Well, here you are, Henry," Steve said. "You got home."

"I'll see you in the morning," Henry said. "I'll be ready by seven."

"I couldn't do that," Steve said. "I'll get it all done."

"Well, okay," Henry said. "But missing a day of school wouldn't hurt. My grades are already so bad that—"

"It's nice of you, kid."

"Well," Henry said.

"I'll look you up," Steve said. "When I got me a weekend job someplace."

"Take it easy, Steve," Henry said.

"You got the money."

"Sure."

"Okay." Steve shifted back from neutral into low. It was an old, beat-up car. The whole body rattled with the idling engine.

Henry got out. Then he turned back.

"Yeah?" Steve said.

"That's a good-looking fireplace you built." Henry didn't know what he had meant to say. But it wasn't that. What was it?

"Take it easy," Steve said.

Henry stood in the street, in the shadow of the tall avocados. He watched the old car turn the corner, the yellow beam of its headlights seeming to bend against the houses. Why did he feel so sad? Steve said he would come get him for a weekend job sometime. And maybe he really would. Maybe he really would. Henry looked up at the tall trees that his dad had planted twenty-five years ago. They looked lonely in the pale moonlight. He crossed himself, then went into the house. He'd have to be quiet. His mother would already be asleep. He had to take a shower, too, before he got into the clean sheets. He probably would never get all that black mud off him. It felt like it had soaked right into him, through the skin and into his bones. It would never come out, all that black mud.

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TAKE ONE SMALL SEED

by John Durham

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AKE ONE SMALL SEED

by JOHN DURHAM

B10 English

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TAKE ONE SMALL SEED

CHAPTER 1

"He can't be going to die," Luz said. She sat at the table watching her mother iron. "It's not fair."

"Nothing's fair," her mother said. "Was it fair for your father to die?" She ironed slowly. Everything she did was slow now. She hadn't cried. Not where Luz could see her. But she did everything very slowly.

"I remember that green, striped shirt of his," her mother said. "How handsome he looked in it, before the Army took him."

"Yes," Luz said. "I remember."

"Can a guy get some breakfast around here?" Juanito came in from the bathroom. His hair was still damp.

"Eat, eat, eat," Luz said, but her voice was gentle. "Don't you think about anything except your gut?"

"Cook him some breakfast," her mother said. "There's sausage."

"How long will he live?" Luz said to her mother. "The captain who wrote you the letter. Did he say?"

"How could he know? We die when it's time. Even in Vietnam."

Luz went to the refrigerator. She took out eggs and margarine and melted the margarine in the pan. Death, she thought. She could not believe death, for herself or for her brother George. "Hail Mary," she said to herself. "Hail Mary, full of grace. Help my poor brother, dying so far away."

"Some guy called you last night while you were working," Juanito said to Luz.

"Sure," she said. "His name was Enrique."

Juanito yawned. "No. Some Irish name."

"You want me to salt these?"

"Naw. You put on too much. His name was Reilly, or something like that."

"Reilly? What did he want?"

"How should I know? To talk to you. That's what he said."

"It was Enrique," Luz said.

"Him," her mother said. "A girl like you, marrying him. You'll support him. You should be in college. You should be a teacher, a girl like you."

"Mama, I know what I want."

"Every girl knows what she wants when she's eighteen. When she's thirty, it's different. Then she wants something else. But it's too late."

"Mama, let's not argue."

"Argue? What's the use? You're eighteen. The law says you can marry any bum you like. Even Enrique."

"Sullivan," Luz said. "Was that his name? The man who called?"

Juanito yawned again, and scratched his chest. "Hey, yeah," he said, "Sullivan."

"My gosh," Luz said, and felt herself reddening. She grew warm and her pulse grew faster. "What did he want, I wonder?"

"Hey," Juanito said. "Sullivan. That's the dopey teacher you had the big crush on last year. Hah!"

"Oh, shut up," Luz said. "Mama," she said, "did you tell Susan about George?"

"I called her last night."

"What did she say?"

"What would you say? She cried for him. Oh, she'll cry for a while," Luz's mother said. "Then she'll find another one. But it won't be George." She finished with the dress and hung it neatly on a hanger. "Ironing other people's clothes. At my age, I should be able to rest. I should be able to go down to the beach on Tuesday."

The knock sounded on the door and Luz knew who it was. Enrique. It was his knock. Her mother was right, maybe. Enrique got jobs and lost them. But her heart stirred and grew warm at his knock. He was tall and his eyes melted her heart. She loved him.

"Come in!" Juanito yelled.

Enrique, smiling, opened the door and stuck his head in. "Hi," he said. "Good morning."

"You're up early," Luz's mother said. "It's only eleven."

"How are you, Mrs. Martinez?" Enrique said.

"Better than you," Luz's mother said. "And so is Luz."

"I heard about George," Enrique said to Luz. "I'm on my way to church, to burn a candle for him."

"He doesn't need your candles," Luz's mother said.

Luz scraped the eggs out onto a plate. "I'll go with you. Let me get my kerchief."

"Hey," Juanito said. "What about the sausage?"

"Cook it yourself, Gut."

"When is this great wedding?" Luz's mother said.

"Saturday, we thought," Enrique said and turned to her, smiling.

"And George? What if he dies by Saturday?"

"We'll wait," Luz said, "of course."

"That's very big of you," her mother said.

The phone rang then, and Juanito grabbed it. "Martinez OpiumWorks."

"Johnny!" Luz said. "How do you know who that *is*?"

"It's for you," Juanito said. "Here." He smiled. He looked at Enrique and smiled broader. "It's that Sullivan guy again."

CHAPTER 2

"Because I was your counselor," Mr. Sullivan said, "I saw your test scores." He lifted his cup to his lips. "You make good coffee."

"I never really thought about college," Luz said. Mr. Sullivan was young, not thirty, with dark hair and deep blue eyes. He wasn't handsome. But the eyes saw you completely. The eyes saw into you. It made Luz shiver, just to sit there in the kitchen with him, even though she loved Enrique. "Besides," she said, "there isn't money."

"There's federal money," he said. "You qualify for that."

"I have to live."

"You could work. Telephone work is perfect."

"I want to get married. You know, there's this boy."

"I didn't know that," Mr. Sullivan said. "Well, if there's that. But many students are married, you know."

"I don't think Enrique would–"

"Enrique? That's the boy?"

"Yes. You were getting married," she said. "How do you like it?"

He laughed. "Oh," he said, "that fell through. She married someone else."

Why did that please her, when she loved Enrique? Luz wondered. "I'm sorry," she said, lying.

"Don't be." Mr. Sullivan finished his coffee and set his hands on the table. "I'm not. She was a nice girl. But. You know?" He smiled. "Well," he said, "I'd better get along."

"You really think I could make it?" Luz said. "In college?"

"You're a bright girl. Sure you can make it, if you want to."

"I'll think about it," she said. "And I'll let you know."

I'm in the phone book." He stood up. Then he did something very strange. He reached over and touched her cheek. With his fingertips. "Take care of yourself."

CHAPTER 3

"I'd have to sit there like a dope," Enrique said. "Like some big dope. While you got this college degree."

"You're not a dope." Luz took his hand. They sat in his car. He had parked in an unfinished housing tract up in the hills. The stars were thin through the ocean haze. The hills, across the valley, were black, with little red and green speckles of light.

"You could go into a trade." Luz said. "You could be a bricklayer or a plumber. They make good money. Or a truck driver. There's nothing wrong with that."

"I couldn't talk to you," Enrique said. "You'd have a head full of all that college stuff."

"I'd teach you," Luz said.

"Who wants his woman teaching him? Not me. Why didn't this guy leave you alone? This Sullivan jerk."

"He's trying to help me."

"Sure," Enrique said. "It's not that you're pretty or anything. It wouldn't be that."

"That's silly," Luz said. But she felt herself blushing in the darkness.

Enrique hit the steering wheel with his fist. "No," he said. "It's either me or college."

She slid next to him on the seat and stroked his cheek with her fingers. Why, he was crying, and she had never known him to cry before. Up in the hills a hawk screeched once, twice. The moon slid behind the mist. "Enrique," she said, "I love you. I won't leave."

CHAPTER 4

Juanito was hunched up on the couch, crying. And Luz would have cried, too. Except that her mother sat dry-eyed at the kitchen table. She sat there, the mother, smoothing out the yellow telegram. "I remember," she said, "the year he was eight. He brought me flowers from the hills. Little purple flowers for my birthday. I was a young woman then." She kept smoothing the wrinkled yellow paper. A deep, terrible sadness moved through Luz.

"I remember," her mother said, "when he was inside my body. I knew he would be a boy. I knew he would be smart and brave."

"Mama," Luz said. "Let me give you a drink of something to make you feel better."

"What will I do with the medal?" Luz's mother said. "What will I do with a piece of metal?"

"Oh, Mama," Luz said. "Don't. You only feel worse."

"He was going to college," her mother said. "He was going to be a lawyer. He was going to help people. Oh, yes," she said, "I remember him. His father died, and George was the man in the house. He did what he had to do. He worked at the market and went to school. He gave me his money every week. And now he's dead, my George."

Luz could not cry. The sorrow in her ran too deep, deep into her body and bones. Sorrow not only for her brother. Sorrow for her mother's loss. Her mother had loved him, this first son, most deeply of her children. Luz felt sorrow for that, because her mother had lost him. And because he was best loved, when she was not. She was the daughter in the house. Loved, all right, but not like the sons, not like George and Johnny. No. Now George was dead. Never would she see him again. Never would she touch his hand, or hear him laugh.

"Why didn't I write him more?" her mother said. "Because I was ashamed. Because my writing wasn't so good."

"He loved your letters, Mama. You wrote as much as you could."

"No," her mother said, shaking her head. "No. I was ironing other people's clothes, so I couldn't write my own son. That's why."

"He loved you, Mama," Luz said. "He loved you more than anything. More than Susan."

"Susan," her mother said. "Now she'll find herself another boy. She'll wait awhile, but then she'll find herself another boy. And why not? The dead are dead."

They sat silent then in the darkening house. It was evening. Outside, a bus roared, changing gears. The refrigerator perked away in the kitchen. A board creaked, somewhere in the house. The knock at the door was sudden and loud.

Luz rose and went to the door.

"Who is it?" her mother asked.

"A mailman," Luz said.

"And what does he want?"

Luz signed for the special delivery letter. She saw the name on the return address. It was George's name but not his writing. The sorrow in her could not be deeper. But when she took the letter, it was. She carried it to her mother, not wanting to. How much could her mother stand? She handed her mother the letter and sank back on her chair.

Her mother took the envelope and stared at it for a moment. "My glasses," she said. "Juan." It was the first time she had called him that. Juan, instead of Juanito. John, instead of Johnny. "Juan, bring me my glasses."

Juan rose from the couch and brought the glasses from the end table. The mother put them on, slowly, staring at the envelope. Then she slit the envelope with one long fingernail. She took out the thin, single sheet of paper and unfolded it. Luz stared at her. She couldn't take her eyes away.

"A nurse is writing for him," she said. She looked up at Luz, blindly.

"What does he say?" Luz whispered.

Her mother shook her head. "He says . . ." She stopped, pursing her lips. Her face worked. "He says that he's getting better. He says not to worry, that he's getting better."

CHAPTER 5

Books lay all around them, books and papers. On the desk sat an unwashed cup and saucer and two dirty glasses. "It's a mess," Mr. Sullivan said. "I wasn't expecting visitors."

"Can a girl be a lawyer?" Luz said. "A girl like me?"

"I suppose. But why not teach?"

"No. It has to be law."

"Try college for a year or two. Then make up your mind."

"My mind's made up."

"Well, the first thing is getting your application in. That's first. Then we apply for the federal money." He looked carefully at her. "You're all right?" he said.

"Sure. I'm all right."

"When will the funeral be?"

"Next week. They fly the bodies now. It's a small war."

"I wish I could–"

"It's all right," Luz said. "It's my mother who worries me."

"It takes time. She'll be all right."

"Yes. There's something else," Luz said.

He looked at her with those deep eyes. "What?"

"I want to know. I *don't* know, but I want to know."

"What?"

"Why I came here. Instead of going to Enrique."

His smile was sad. "I knew that a long time ago," he said. "A long time ago."

CHAPTER 6

Down the long, straight streets of Los Angeles, a man turned to look at the funeral car. Then a woman did the same. Juan sat very straight and solemn in his black suit, his new shoes. The mother was white and tired under her veil. Quietly they traveled down the long, long streets in the bright, hot sunlight.

"I wish," Luz whispered.

"Yes," her mother said. "But that does no good."

The hearse and two cars moved smoothly through a red light. "There aren't many people," Juan said.

"Enough people," the mother said. "All the people I want."

Down the long, long streets, past stores and service stations, past houses and parks. Down the long, long streets. All the cars made way for death.

The cemetery was lovely, the trees dropping hard shadows, the grass stretching green, the long rows of simple stones. The guard of soldiers, holding their rifles, looked young, as young as George. The coffin lay heavy and silent under the flag. Luz stood dumb, not able to cry. The chaplain finished what he was saying. The guard raised their rifles. Luz jerked when the six rifles barked against the flat, hot sky. Little tufts of smoke drifted away against the green of the trees. It was over. It was over now.

CHAPTER 7

"But I'm not a man," Juan said to her. The mother had gone to the store. Juan was still dressed in his funeral suit. "She thinks I'm a man," Juan said. "But I'm not." He put his hands to his face. "He was bigger than I am," he said. "He was smarter."

"He was older," Luz said. "You'll get big. And smart."

Juan shook his head. "No," he said. "I can't be like him." He touched the folded flag his mother had left on the table. "I can't be like him," he said.

"Until you get big," Luz said, "I'll do his part."

Juan looked at her and smiled faintly. "My sister," he said.

Luz smiled, too. "Yes," she said.

CHAPTER 8

They stood outside the church, on the steps. Enrique puffed nervously at a cigarette. "It would have been today," he said.

"Don't talk about it," Luz said.

"All I have left is talk."

"You have me," she said, "if you want me."

"You say that."

"I mean it. You have me."

He flipped the cigarette off into the gutter. "Ah, no," he said. "I couldn't be less than my woman. I couldn't do that. You wouldn't want me for long."

"Enrique," she said, "I swear to you. I would be your wife forever. I would be a good wife."

He smiled. "You would be," he said. "I know that. But you know?"

"What?"

"I'm not for you. I'm not in your class," he said. "That's what. It's hard to say. But last night–" He stopped.

"What?"

"Oh, last night I couldn't sleep. I laid there in my bed, thinking. I thought about a year from now. I thought about five years from now. And I knew I wasn't the right guy. It was hard to think to myself. But I knew it."

"You are," she said.

"That Sullivan guy," he said.

"What about him?"

"Do you love him?"

"If I do," she said, "I don't know it."

"You know what?" Enrique said.

"No," she said, shaking her head. She had to bite her lip.

"The big things," Enrique said. "Those are the things we don't know." He tapped the marriage license against the flat palm of his hand. "This isn't much good," he said. "Do you want it?"

Luz shook her head. She couldn't speak. Enrique, Enrique.

"I couldn't keep it, either," he said.

He took his lighter from his pocket and flicked the flint with his thumb. "There," he said. He set the flame to the edge of the paper. "There."

Luz lifted a hand to stop him. Then she stood and watched as the heavy paper flamed and blackened and crumbled.

CHAPTER 9

"Don't do it for me," her mother said. "I didn't ask you to do any of it." Her mother looked old. She sat there in the restaurant in her good dress. Her face was old and drawn. She was touched with death, Luz thought. The waitress moved softly, bringing their coffee.

"I'm doing it for myself," Luz said.

"It's not too late," her mother said. "One phone call will get Enrique back. One phone call."

"No, it's too late for that," Luz said. And she was right. Pain burned inside her. She was right. Her life had become something new.

"He's a good boy," her mother said. "Oh, I said he was a bum. But he's polite. And he's kind."

"Yes," Luz said, "but it's too late."

"No," her mother said, "not if you want him."

"Drink your coffee, Mama."

"So you're ordering me around?" Her mother smiled a small smile. "You're the woman now, are you?"

Luz blushed. "No," she said. "No."

"Well," her mother said. Her face grew distant again. "It's your life," she said. "To be what you want. Eighteen, and everything is possible. I remember."

"Drink your coffee, Mama," Luz said. "And we'll go to Mass."

"Mass," her mother said flatly. "Mass."

CHAPTER 10

Rain fell on the city, the first rain of October. Leaves gusted across the square. "I don't like Olvera Street," Luz said. "It's hokey."

"It's a little hokey," Mr. Sullivan said, "but the food's good up at this one restaurant."

Luz huddled into her raincoat. "Lock your car," she said.

"Oh, it'll be all right. There's nothing in it."

"Somebody could steal it."

"They can get in, if they want to."

They walked across the square, across the old paving, slick with rain. The wet wind beat into their faces. "How's school?" he said.

"All right. The biology is hard. But I'm doing all right. How's your work on the doctorate?"

"I'll be finished up in the spring," he said.

"Then what?"

"I have a friend back east. In a small college. He's head of the department. He wants me to come there."

"East?"

"Missouri," he said.

"That's a long way off."

"Yes, it is. It's a long way."

They walked in silence through the chill rain.

"What do you hear from Enrique?" he said.

"He's at Pendleton. He'll go to Vietnam, when he finishes training."

"War," he said. "Wars just keep happening, don't they?"

"Yes," she said.

"Have you ever been east?"

"No. To Las Vegas once, if that's east."

He laughed. "No," he said. "But Missouri."

"No," she said. "I've never been there."

"It's beautiful," he said. "Wooded hills and streams. You'd like it." He stopped at the door of the restaurant and looked into her eyes. "Do you think you'd like it?"

She smiled. "I don't know," she said. "Do you?"

CHAPTER 11

One week to Christmas. She and Enrique were shopping, on Lake Street, in Pasadena. Christmas trees decorated with giant toys lined the center of the street. A Salvation Army girl rang her bell in front of a store. The air was warm. The sunlight slanted pale and clear from above the mountains.

"You aren't wearing your uniform." Luz looked Enrique over. He wore a dark blue suit and a striped tie.

"People don't wear their uniforms on leave much," Enrique said.

"You look all different."

Enrique passed his hand across his short hair.

"Not just the hair," Luz said. "You look different. I don't know."

They walked up the steps of Bullock's department store. "I didn't tell you," Enrique said.

"Tell me what?"

"That they want to give me officer's training."

Luz beamed. "Is that right?" she said. "How come?"

"My test scores," he said. "They said they were very high. Imagine that? Me with high test scores?" He stopped and looked away from her. "You know, they said I should have gone to college."

He turned and looked in her eyes. He took her hand in his. "And you know something else? I'm going, when I get out."

Luz knew what he was trying to say. He was good enough for her. He was equal to her. He was trying to say something like that. He had been all the time, of course. But he knew it, now. Warmth spread through her, tenderness. She squeezed his hand. "I'm so proud of you."

He smiled, like a little boy. He looked away. "Would you wait for me?" he said. "Just wait?"

Luz reached upward and kissed him on the cheek. "We'll see. There's lots of time."

"Oh, sure," he said. But his eyes were sad and distant. "Hey," he said, "what do you want for Christmas? I'm loaded with money."

CHAPTER 12

Luz and her mother worked in the backyard, turning the soil in the garden. The apricot tree, now in February, was in first bloom. The new grass was tender under Luz's bare feet.

Luz's mother stopped to wipe sweat from her face. She looked up into the branches of the tree. “Spring again,” she said.

“Yes,” Luz said. The tree was George's. Their father had planted it for George, twenty years ago. “You miss him, don't you?” Luz said.

“I always will.” The mother's face was thin, her arms slack. Her hair had grayed in the six months. “Every day, I remember him,” she said. “I always will.” She looked at Luz, then back at the tree. “He climbed there, on that branch. And that one.”

“Yes.’ Luz said.

“I can't eat the fruit this year,” her mother said. “Not this year. Maybe next.”

“He'd want you to be happy,” Luz said.

“Oh, yes.” Her mother dug her spade into the earth. “You,” she said. “What are you going to do?”

“Me? What I'm doing. School. Work.”

“And this Sullivan? Jim, you call him now. What about him?”

Luz flushed. “I see him,” she said. “That's all.”

“No more than that?”

Luz couldn't lie. Why should she lie? “He wants me to go with him to Missouri, in the fall.”

“Does he?” The mother's spade chunked into the earth again. “And what do you want?”

"To do what I'm doing. Go to school. Go to work."

"You're not a girl, not any more."

"I'm only nineteen," Luz said.

"Age doesn't matter." Her mother straightened up from the spade. She held a hand flat against the small of her back. "A woman is someone who knows who she is."

"You think I do?"

"Yes. So what do you want?"

"What I said."

"Then there's Enrique."

"Yes."

"In officer's school. Is that right?"

"Yes, Mama. I told you that."

"You told me. I can still ask. Can't I?"

"Yes, Mama. Yes, you can."

"So he's in officer's school. And what does he want?"

"I don't know."

"You know."

"He'd marry me. He said so at Christmas. Yes."

"We need bone meal," the mother said, "but it costs too much. At my age, I should have money to pay for things."

"We'll have money, Mama."

"When I'm dead. So go to Missouri."

"He's not a Catholic, Mama. You know that."

"Do you care?"

"I don't know."

"You love a man, you let the church take care of itself."

"You don't believe that, Mama."

"Don't I?" The mother stooped to pick up a rock from the dirt."See that? That's been there a million years. Waiting for me to break my back picking it up."

Luz laughed.

"It's funny, is it?" The mother smiled faintly. "So marry Enrique, then."

"Did you buy the seed?"

"Yes. Ten packages. In the garage."

"That's good."

"So dig," her mother said. "And we'll have tomatoes this summer."

CHAPTER 13

His hand was on her bare arm. April sun flowed across the sand, the water. A sail tilted against the blue, far out.

"I read your letter," Jim said.

"But you didn't believe it." Luz closed her eyes and lay flat on the blanket.

"I believe it," he said. "Why shouldn't I?"

"Last night you said–"

"Oh, sure," he said. "Last night. I hoped you'd change your mind. That's all. A man has a right to hope, doesn't he?"

"It's not only her," Luz said. "It's Johnny. He needs me. You know, her mind wanders. She doesn't take care of him."

"I can't argue with you. How can I argue with you?"

"Did I ask you to argue?"

He laughed a little bitter laugh. "I think you'd like me to. But I can't. They need you. That's clear."

"You could stay here and teach."

"High school? I'm sick of high school."

"Besides, I'm too young."

"You're a woman," Jim said.

Luz sat up. "People keep saying that. They keep telling me I'm a woman. And you know how I feel inside? I feel like a little girl. Just like a little girl. I'm confused." Anger spurted up in her, anger and sorrow and fear. "Everything anybody wants, I could have," she wailed. "And me, I can't–" She was crying, suddenly. She put her hands to her face.

Jim laid his cheek against her shoulder. "Don't," he whispered.

"Why not?" she said. "Why shouldn't I? Nobody saw me cry when George died. Did they?"

"Not that I know of."

"And nobody's seen me cry since. It's my turn, isn't it?"

"Yes," he said. "Luz." He turned her toward him. His lips were warm on hers. The light surf splashed on the hard sand at the water's edge. A sandpiper, down the beach, piped his high call. "You love me," he whispered. "You know you do."

And it was true. She knew that when he left she would be lost. She knew that. But there was Juan. There was her mother. It was April. Two months and he'd be gone. The sandpiper spread his short wings and sailed down the cool sand.

"If I were a bird," she said softly.

"Then what?"

"I'd fly where I liked."

"Where would you like to fly?"

"Oh," she said. "I don't know. To the woods. To the hills."

"To a place like Missouri."

"Yes." She looked at him and smiled. "That's where I'd fly."

CHAPTER 14

The vine bent low with the weight of tomatoes, green and green-orange and red. "You take one small seed," her mother said. She stopped and plucked a ripe tomato from the vine. "You wait. You work and you wait. Then, if you're lucky."

"We were lucky this year," Luz said. She picked tomatoes and put them in the basket.

"The letter was from Enrique?"

"Yes."

"And he's in Vietnam."

"Yes." She turned away from her mother, to another vine. She could never tell her. Enrique's father had called her last night. He, too, had his yellow telegram. Luz had done her crying in the night, silently. But her mother was old since George's death. She was old at forty-five. Luz was afraid to tell her about Enrique.

"I was wrong about him," her mother said. "He's a good boy. When he comes back–"

"We'll have to give tomatoes away," Luz said. Was her voice thick with the tears she held back?

"We'll sell them," her mother said. "Give them away!"

"Who'll buy them?"

"Anyone wants ripe tomatoes off the vine. They're sweet, like fruit. Not like those in the store, that they pick green."

"Mother?" Luz said.

"I'm here," her mother said. "I've been here all the time."

"Could you live in Missouri?"

"And be someone's mother-in-law? I have my house, right here. I have my friends."

"Yes," Luz said.

"He's asked you again, has he?"

"Yes, Mama. He said that you and Juan could–"

"He's a kind boy," her mother said. "But no. I couldn't leave California. You go. Go! I told you."

Luz put her hand on her mother's shoulder. "Not without you," she said. "I couldn't."

"You're wrong," her mother said. "I can take care of myself and Juan. You're wrong. But who am I to say? You're a woman now."

"The apricots are almost ripe."

Her mother looked up at the tree. Her face went still. "Yes," she said, "the apricots are almost ripe again."

CHAPTER 15

"There's only the little house," the lawyer said. "That's all. I'll have to sell it for you. To pay the funeral expenses. There'll be several thousand dollars left."

"No," Luz said. "I won't sell it."

"And the funeral?"

"I'll pay for it out of my salary."

"That will take you a long–"

"I'll do it," Luz said. "And I'll pay you, too. Ten dollars a month."

"That will be all right," the lawyer said. He was an older man, gray and paunchy. He smiled at her. "You're a brave girl."

"I'm a woman," Luz said. "I have to be now. It cost me a lot to learn that I have to be."

"You'll do all right," the lawyer said. "Well, I'll be getting along. I'll get the title to the house fixed up. You'll be a ward of the court until you're twenty-one, huh? Or until you marry."

"I won't marry until Juan is on his own. Maybe not then."

"You're too pretty not to marry." The lawyer took his hat and went to the door. "If you need anything," he said.

"Sure. I'll call your office."

"That's right. You just call."

Luz went to the window when he was gone. In the backyard the apricot tree was bare with winter. Chill light washed from a gray sky. Everything was dead. George was gone and Enrique. And now her mother, who had not wanted to live. A month now, since she died. A month in the dead earth of the cemetery. Luz went to the table and picked up Jim's letter.

> —and so I'm married now. I shouldn't say it, I suppose. But I wish it were you, Luz. Goodbye.

Luz dropped the letter to the table. "Juan," she called.

Juan stuck his head out the bedroom door. "Yeah?" he said.

"We have to go shopping," she said. "You need a new coat."

"My old one is all right."

"No."

Juan shrugged. "Okay," he said. "It's your money."

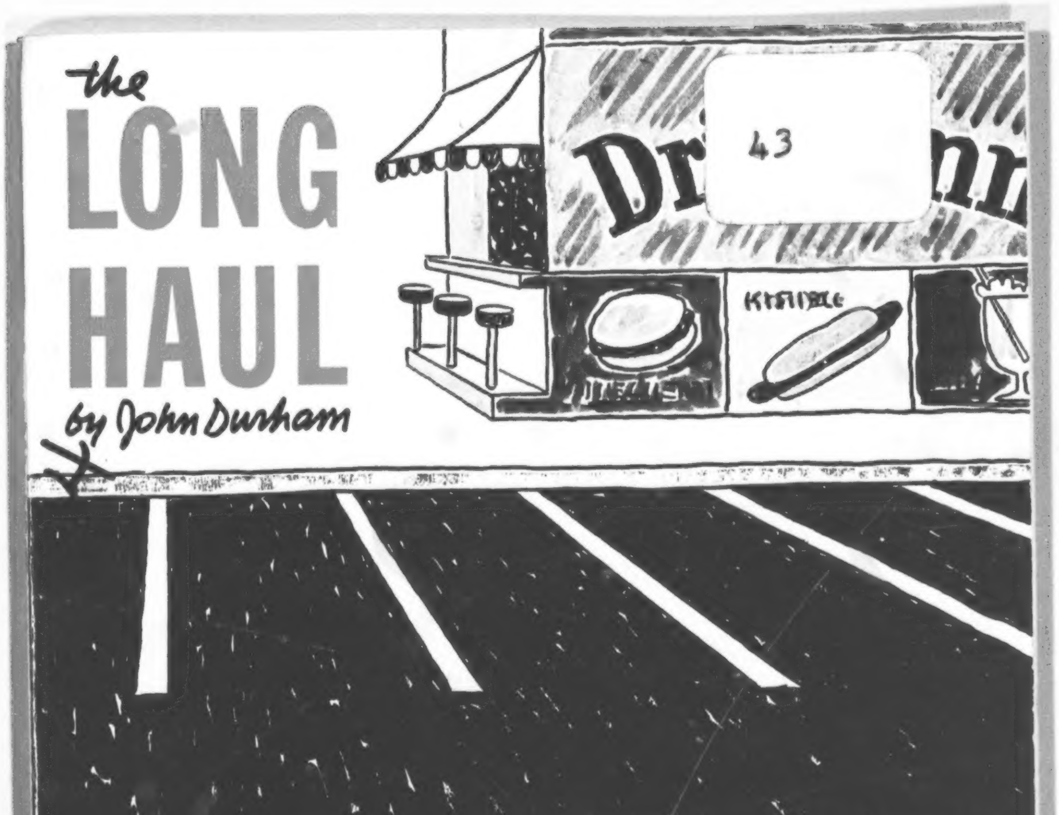
"Comb your hair," she said. She laughed. "You look like a walking bird's nest."

"All *right*," he said, laughing.

Luz slipped into her own coat. It was two months until spring. But she thought she'd stop by the hardware store and buy some seed. They'd want tomatoes this summer. And chard and other things. She would have a big garden. You take one small seed and make a summer. She would be all right. Everything was dead now. But summer would come again.

the LONG HAUL

by John Durham



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by JOHN DURHAM

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THE LONG HAUL

CHAPTER 1

"You gonna light that thing right here?" James said. They were sitting in Porter's new convertible.

Porter grinned at him. "Why not, man? It's only a little old cocktail. Six, eight puffs, it's gone."

"Fuzz come in and out of this drive-in all the time," James said. "You got any more pot on you?"

"No, man. I got to pick up a load tonight."

"You get busted," James said, "if you want to. But you leave me out of it."

"They ain't gonna bust you," Porter said. "How they gonna do that? You ain't the one with the pot. It's me." He lit the twisted end of the cocktail – marijuana tamped into the hollowed-out end of a regular cigarette. The heavy, sweet, oily odor floated out around James. "And they ain't even gonna bust me. 'Cause I ain't gonna get caught. You know?"

"Just for sittin' here," James said. "They could get me for that. Up to three years."

"Naw, man."

"I read it," James said. "In the *Times*. Yes, sir."

"That ain't right," Porter said. "It ain't right to bust a man for sittin'."

"What's right and what is, they're not always the same," James said. "Well, I got to get to work."

"You're chicken," Porter said. "Runnin' out 'cause of a little old one inch of pot."

"Man, I got a job."

"Some job. Wipin' off windshields for folks got cars. And you ain't even got one."

"I'll get one," James said. "I'm savin'."

"How long? How long before you have that car? I'll tell you. Five years, that's how long. Then you maybe can get a beat-up old secondhand job. Maybe."

"It won't take that long," James said.

"Inside of six months," Porter said, "you could have somethin' like this little old sweet baby." He stroked the steering wheel of the new convertible. "It's my sweet little baby."

"You get busted just once," James said. "And it's gone. How much you make doin' time?"

"They ain't got me, man. They ain't gonna get me."

"I hope not," James said. "For your sake and Momma's, too. You kill Momma if you let them bust you."

"She had her times," Porter said. "Maybe you don't remember. But I do. Oh, she had some big times for herself, Momma did. I can tell you that."

"That was over with a long time ago," James said.

Porter sucked in smoke from the cigarette. He drew in deep, then sucked in air between his teeth in quick, gasping draws. "Man, that's good," he said. "That's *good*." Music poured out the drive-in's loudspeakers.

That was when Laura drove up, in the next stall. She had her father's new car. She leaned out the window, smiling at Porter.

"You're a bad, bad boy," she said.

Porter grinned back at her. "What you mean?" he said. "You know I'm good."

"Oh, I know you *could* be teaching Sunday school," Laura said. "You *could* be. It's just the brand of cigarettes you smoke. That's all."

Porter grinned at her. "You too smart, baby," he said. He looked around behind him, nervously. "What you know about that brand of cigarettes?"

"Mexican Delights," Laura said. "Isn't that what they call them?"

"Come on over and have a beer," Porter said. "Little brother, he's got to go wipe windshields."

"Hello there, James," Laura said. "How's business down at the station?" She got out of her father's new car and came over.

"Get in here," James said. "I have to go."

"I'll take you down there," Porter told him. "It ain't only six blocks."

"Naw, man," James said. "I'll walk."

"I forgot what it's like to walk," Porter said to Laura. "Ain't you?"

She laughed. "Take it easy, James," she said.

James went off across the driveway, hating to go. He hated to leave Laura, even when she gave him a hard time. It made him sick, sick inside, to watch Porter with a girl like that. Porter, he had his way with them. And it made James sick, watching Porter twist them around. Laura, she'd be in college in the fall. She was smart, straight A's all the way through school. And a doctor for a daddy, to pay her way. She was light, she was built, she was smart. But not smart enough to see through Porter. Oh, it made James sick to watch Porter with Laura. Him and his new car. Him and his pot, strutting around like some rooster with shiny feathers, strutting and crowing. It made James sick, even if Porter was his brother. Or his half brother, anyway. Peddling pot around the high school. Running numbers. Worrying Momma to death. Was Porter hustling junk? Not yet, maybe, but he would be.

He walked fast the six blocks to the station. He ducked into the back, changed into his uniform, and got back to the office three minutes before seven.

"There you are," Mr. Wilbur said. "How you doin', this evenin'?"

"Fine," James said.

"Cash is all added up," Mr. Wilbur said. "Here's the list. That Kramer woman is bringin' her Buick over for a lube and change. About seven-thirty."

"All right," James said.

"I got to get on home," Mr. Wilbur said. He sighed. "A man my age shouldn't work so hard. I'll die," he said. "Right out there on one of them islands. I'll just keel over and die. That's what'll happen to me."

"You got a long time," James said.

"I got to get home," Mr. Wilbur said. "Old lady called. Said she's got me pork chops. When she knows I don't like pork."

"I'll clean out that storage room," James said.

"Oh, one other thing." Mr. Wilbur stopped halfway out the office door. He wasn't looking at James.

"What's that?"

"I got this nephew," Mr. Wilbur said. "Comin' up from down home. You know, Missouri?"

James knew before he said it. He knew what he was going to say. It made his stomach tighten up. It made him tense up in his throat. He knew what Porter would say.

"Well, he needs a job bad," Mr. Wilbur said. He stared off at the lights of the city, above the buildings across the street. "That'll be in two weeks," he said. "So," he said.

"So you got to let me go," James said.

"That's about it." Mr. Wilbur shuffled his feet. "Not that you ain't done a just first-rate job, James. It ain't that. It's just that this boy, he's my wife's nephew. He's got to have somethin' to do. It's a family thing."

"Sure," James said.

"I'll ask around," Mr. Wilbur said. "I heard old Tomey, over around the freeway, he needs a boy."

"That's all right, Mr. Wilbur," James said. "It's one of those things."

"That's what it is," Mr. Wilbur said. "One of those things. That's right. Well, I got to go eat them pork chops. You take it easy, James."

CHAPTER 2

Laura slid into the place next to James on the lunchroom bench. He nodded and chewed his salami sandwich. He wished she hadn't caught him with his mouth full like that. It seemed like whenever he saw Laura, he had his mouth full, or his shirt dirty, with grease or something.

"Hi," she said.

James nodded again.

"I heard you lost your job."

"What?" It was very noisy, noisy and hot.

"I heard you lost your job."

James swallowed. "Who told you that?"

"Porter told me. He said the old man just fired you."

"It wasn't like that. He had this nephew."

"Is that what he told you?"

"Sure," James said. "Isn't that right?"

"Porter says the old man, he just doesn't like colored around," Laura said. "That's what Porter told me. Said he told Mr. Tomey that. And Mr. Tomey told Porter."

"Aw," James said. "I don't believe it. Porter's always shooting his mouth off."

"He *is* a big talker. That's for sure."

"He's all right," James said. "He just talks too much."

"Three more weeks. And then we're *free*. Isn't that great? School will be out forever."

"Great."

"You going to college next fall?"

"Me? Me?" James laughed. "Aw, no, girl. College?" He laughed again.

"Well, you *could*."

"Girl, I got no money. How could I–"

"Go to City College. Just to start. You've got brains. My daddy, he thinks a lot of you."

"Does he?"

"He sure does. Every time I even say Porter's name, Daddy brings *you* up. I get a little sick of it. But Daddy says you're the one with brains."

"Does he?"

"He says you shouldn't waste them."

"Well," James said. It delighted him. It did. He didn't know Dr. Thomas ever thought about him.

"You seen Porter?" Laura said casually.

"Since when?"

"Since, oh, three or four days. I just haven't seen him."

"I don't know," James said. "He hasn't been home. Since that night I saw you at the drive-in."

Laura sighed. "Yeah," she said. "Well, I got to get to class."

"Sure," James said. "Take care of yourself."

Laura picked up her books. "You ought to stop by and talk to Daddy sometime," she said.

"He hasn't got time for me."

"He'd *love* it," Laura said. "He really would. He just loves to give out advice. Believe you me."

CHAPTER 3

"Why don't you just move all your things on out?" Momma said. "And get it over with?"

Porter laughed. "And then never hear the last of it?" he said. "I move out, you'd *never* let me hear the last of it. That's for sure."

"You try it," Momma said. "It'd be better than *thinkin'* you live here, when you don't. It would relieve my mind, boy. It *would.* Just to know not to look for you. Where in the world have you been?"

"Up to Frisco," Porter said. "How you been, old James?"

"All right," James said. He dropped his book and watched Porter. Porter had on a new Ivy League suit and new, expensive shoes.

"You still lookin' for work?"

"Not with you," James said.

"I guess not." Porter took off his jacket and laid it on a chair. He stretched. "I ain't had no sleep in three days," he said, yawning. "I am beat. I mean it."

"You sure it wasn't Mexico?" Momma said. "That sounds more likely to me."

"You worry too much," Porter said.

"Just you don't bring any of that stuff around here. That's all. And get James and me into trouble. That's *all.* We don't need that."

Porter turned and looked at Momma, right into her eyes. "Have I got you into any trouble?" he said. "I ask you that. Have I?"

"Not yet," Momma said.

"And I won't *never*," Porter said.

"I don't know why you talk like you just came out of the cotton patch," Momma said. "When I taught you better."

"I talk what's natural to *me*," Porter said. "I'm just gonna be me, you know?"

"You could be you and talk decent," Momma said.

"Like your sweet little Straightarrow over there?" Porter said mockingly. He nodded at James. "Who's supportin' old Straightarrow?"

"Not you," James said. "I still have money. Money I saved up."

"Yeah," Porter said. He rubbed his back. "Well, you let me know when you run out."

"You don't have to worry," Momma said. "He'll have himself a job, any day now."

"Wipin' windshields," Porter said. He snorted. "Coolie work."

"Dr. Thomas," Momma said. "He's going to help James get into college this fall."

Porter turned and looked at James, then at Momma. "College?" he said. "You're puttin' me on."

"No," Momma said. "He's going to study medicine."

Porter laughed. "Medicine," he said, imitating Momma's careful voice. "That'll be the day. One of this family a doctor." He laughed.

"You watch him," Momma said. "He'll do it. You just watch."

"Hey, kid," Porter said. He reached into his pocket and peeled a twenty off a roll of bills. "Here. Run down to the drugstore and get me a carton of cigarettes. And keep the change." He threw the bill to James. "It'll keep you goin' until your first operation."

James caught the bill in mid-air.

"Don't you *dare*," Momma said. "He's not your servant. Give him that money back," she said to James.

"Oh, Momma," James said. "I don't mind. I'm not doing anything. Readin'."

"Don't you *dare*," Momma said.

"Momma," Porter said, "Why don't you just unlax? Last week God, He decided to run the world again. So you wouldn't have to. Ain't that nice?"

"You keep a decent tongue in your head," Momma said. "Don't you go blaspheming around my house."

"I know you been runnin' things for a long time," Porter said. "But God, He's rested now."

Momma walked over to him with quick, short steps. She slapped him, hard, across the cheek.

Porter looked at her. "Don't you do that, woman," he said. "Don't no woman hit me. I don't care whose mother she is. You do that again and I'll unjar you from some teeth, you hear me?"

"And then you'll have me to take on," James said.

Porter turned and looked at him. "Yeah," he said. "I guess I would, at that. But you and me, we don't want to fight over no woman. Do we?"

Mamma looked from Porter to James and back to Porter. "Oh, you're smart," she said, "dividing up this house like that. Or trying to."

Porter laughed. "I just want some sleep," he said. "Man, I am tired. Them back roads down in–" He caught himself and grinned again. "Anyway," he said, "I'm tired."

"The back roads down in Mexico," Momma said. "You could finish it up. We know. Now you're hauling it in for them. And hustling it. What else do you do for Landry and those others? Those cheap crooks and hustlers?"

"You stay off of Landry," Porter said. "He's all right. And there's nothin' cheap about him. I can tell you that." He pulled a big roll of bills out of the pocket of his new suit. "See that?"

"I see it," Momma said. "It looks like dirt to me. It looks like filth."

"Then don't spend none of it," Porter said. "Now let me get some sleep."

CHAPTER 4

School was out. James had his diploma. But that was all he had. He couldn't find a job. He spent four weeks walking the streets. Four weeks, all day long. And there was nothing. Now, on a Friday at the end of the fourth week, he left the house and walked toward the drive-in. He was tired of reading. He was registered for college in the fall, thanks to Dr. Thomas. But that seemed forever, September did. Besides, he couldn't go to college if he didn't find work. He thought he'd just go up to the drive-in and hang around, spend one or two of his last twenty dollars.

He had a coke with some of the boys, hanging around, listening to the rock and roll. It was nothing, hanging around like that. It was nowhere. Then Laura wheeled into the parking area in her father's car. She pulled up with a swish of tires and honked, twice. She waved James over.

"Come on," she said. "Get in."

He knew he was grinning all over himself, like some little kid. But he didn't care. He opened the door and slid into the car.

"Hi, old James," she said. "How're things?"

"Rotten," he said.

"What's the matter?"

"Girl, I'm still on the street, just looking."

"Yeah," she said. "That's tough. You seen Porter?"

He should have known. He should have known she didn't want to talk to him. It was always Porter.

"Porter?" he said. "Oh, he was around the house all day. Said he'd be by here tonight. And sure enough," he said, "there he comes."

Porter's new convertible wheeled in beside them. Porter was grinning at the wheel. James felt himself go all slack and dry inside. He was miserable. Always Porter.

"Hey, cats," Porter said. "What's the deal?"

"There's my man," Laura said. "Where have you been?"

"Oh, around," Porter said. "Doing very important things." He looked a little wild, like he was turned on.

"Come on over," Laura called.

"Oh, you *know* it," Porter said. He got out of his car, stopped with the door open, and looked around. Then he reached into the back, under the seat, and came up with a pack of "cigarettes."

"Got to get my magic wands," he said. He came over and got into Laura's car.

"You cats, you want to turn on?" he said.

"Not me," James said.

"I wouldn't mind," Laura said. "I've never tried it."

"About time," Porter said, "when you got a man hustlin' the stuff. It looks bad, when you don't use it. You know what I mean? It looks downright bad." He handed Laura a "cigarette."

"Don't you do that," James said to Laura. "Girl, you might as well rob a bank. You'll do the same kind of time."

"Oh, hush, boy," Porter said. "Let the girl turn on. She got to have some fun sometime, ain't she? What you want her to be, some old fuddy-duddy? Huh? That's a cool chick, there." Porter laughed. "Who are you?" he said. "You sound like The Man's own boy. What The Man done for you lately? Huh? You need some money?" he said.

"No," James said. "I'll make it."

"Take fifty," Porter said. "Take a hundred." He pulled out that roll he always had.

James looked at the money. It made him sick to think he could have that much, more, maybe. If only he would work for Landry, or somebody like him.

"Naw, man," he said. He shook his head.

"Hey," Porter said. "Watch it." He flung the pack of cigarettes out James's side of the car. He grabbed the cigarette from Laura and stuffed it into his mouth.

"What you doing?" Laura said. "Why are you—"

Porter shook his head and waved wildly off to the left. James didn't know where the police car came from. It was just there, suddenly. The two cops got out slowly and walked toward Laura's car. One was white, one Negro.

"Hey there, Porter," the Negro cop said. He walked over and leaned on top of the car, peering in. "What you doin', man?"

Porter shook his head, grinning nervously. He couldn't talk. His mouth was full.

The other cop went on past the car. He was looking at the ground. He walked slowly, kicking papers aside, ice cream wrappers, napkins. He walked slowly and carefully, his eyes intent on the asphalt. Then he stopped and picked up something and came back toward Laura's car. James felt his heart shrink to nothing inside him. He felt his throat go dry. The Man, there he was. The Man they had been telling him about all his life. The

Man who'd hurt him, if he could. The Man who was after him.

"What can we do for you, gentlemen?" Porter said. He had swallowed the stuff down.

"You can just take a little ride with us," the Negro cop said.

"I got my own nice car over there," Porter said. "I wouldn't want to put you out."

"Let's not kid around, Porter," the Negro cop said. "Come on out of there."

"What for?"

"You know," the cop said. "Possession. Now get out of there. You, too," he said to James.

"You leave the girl out of it," Porter said.

"Why should I? She's here, isn't she?"

Laura turned and looked at James. Her lips were set hard together. Her hands were trembling. "Oh, Lord," she said. "What's my daddy gonna say?"

CHAPTER 5

Dr. Thomas shook his head. He was a big man, solid and big in the old wooden armchair. "A girl like you," he said, "in jail. And you, James."

"It wasn't Laura's fault," James said. "Porter brought the stuff over."

"She knew the kind of man Porter was," Dr. Thomas said. "She knew she shouldn't hang around with a man like that." He patted James's hand. "Forgive me," he said, "for talking about your brother that way. But it's true."

"It's terrible," Laura said. "They treat you like absolute dirt in here. They *do*." She was crying.

"Now, listen to me," the lawyer said, "all of you. I can arrange bail–I'm sure of that. We'll get a hearing in the morning. And I'll have her out."

"The boy, too," Dr. Thomas said. "It wasn't his fault. She invited him into the car."

"It'll cost you," the lawyer said, "quite a bit."

"He's good for it," Dr. Thomas said. He patted James on the shoulder.

"They're both seventeen," the lawyer said. "Is that right?"

"Yes," Dr. Thomas said.

"Good. They'll both go into juvenile court then. We'll get bail in the morning. It's not like they knocked over the Bank of America."

"Tomorrow?" Laura said. "Daddy, I don't think I can stand it in there all night. They treat you like you're *nothing*. I can't stand it."

"Little lady," the lawyer said, "you better hope you don't have to spend a lot of nights in some place like this. You better pray. I'll do what I can. But I could use some help." He looked around at Dr. Thomas. "Let's go," he said. "We have to work out the details with a bail man."

"No, we don't," Dr. Thomas said. "I think I'll have the cash."

"Then we have to talk about that," the lawyer said. "There's nothing more to do here."

Laura stood up and put both arms around her father. "Don't go, Daddy," she said. "Don't you go away!" James could have cried himself, just watching her.

CHAPTER 6

"And both these young people understand that they are waiving their constitutional rights to trial by jury?" the judge said. He was a slender man in his fifties, wearing glasses with gold rims. His face was solemn as he looked down at James and Laura.

"Since the court has decided that they must be tried in this court, rather than the juvenile," the lawyer said. "Yes, I've talked to them. I've explained it all. They wish to plead guilty because of unusual circumstances I've explained to Your Honor. Under the strict terms of the law, they're guilty. But they had no intention of breaking the law, Your Honor. As I've explained."

"Yes, I have their stories," the judge said. "You understand," he said to James and Laura, "that this is a serious charge." He looked at them carefully as they nodded. "Each of you could go to a regular, adult prison for a considerable term of years."

They nodded. James felt himself sinking. He felt himself dying, right there. He wished he could be anywhere else, out in the sunshine. Working. In school. He wished he could be anywhere else.

"In view of your extreme youth, however," the judge said. "And in view of your perfect records up to this point. In view of those things and the fact that you're both going to enter college in the fall, we'll go about it this way. I find you guilty and sentence you to six months apiece. Is that clear? You've been found guilty of a felony."

They nodded.

Six months, James thought. It was forever. Six months gone out of his life.

"But we'll suspend that sentence." James looked around at the lawyer. He had known perfectly well what "suspended" meant, before. But it wouldn't come clear in his head, not now. "The conviction will be on your records forever," the judge said. "But you will not have to go to jail now. And you will not have probation hanging over your heads. Is that clear?"

Laura and James nodded.

"I could dismiss the case," the judge said. "Such cases have been dismissed. But I think other young people should be warned. I think they should know that trifling with narcotics is a serious business." He paused. "I merely hope," he said, "that you two will become the kind of good citizens I think you're capable of becoming." He nodded to the lawyer, then rose from the bench.

"All right, kids," the lawyer said. "We can go now."

"We don't have to go to jail?" Laura said.

"He suspended the sentence. No. you're free. You just have it on your record."

"Oh, thank God," Laura said. "Oh, thank God!"

CHAPTER 7

"So what happened to your friend Landry?" James said to Porter. They were separated by a thick pane of glass, talking through mikes. "Isn't he going to help you?"

"He lit out," Porter said. "They was after him."

"Well, I'll do what I can," James said. "And so will Momma. I got another job."

"Where's that, man?"

"In another station."

Porter snorted. "Man, that won't buy my lawyer's cufflinks," he said. "That won't buy his *matches.*"

"It's all I can do," James said.

"You could hustle."

"No, man," James said. "I've had it with all that stuff. I'm in for the long haul."

"You can be a doctor with a felony rap on you?"

"I can study for it."

"But, man, they won't give you no license."

"The lawyer, he says I can petition. After a few years. To clear my record. They do it, sometimes."

"And what if they don't?"

"I don't know," James said. "But I got to try."

Porter looked at him for a long time. "You got guts," he said. "I'll say that for you. Well," he said, "I guess I've had it. No money. My lawyer's gonna bug out."

"The court will give you a lawyer."

"Oh, yeah, oh, yeah, man. They'll give me some little guy don't know *beans*. That's what they'll give me. Oh, I've had it. I know that."

"I'll come up with what money I can."

"That's good," Porter said. He wasn't listening. "You seen Laura?" he said.

"Oh, around. She won't much talk to me. I talk to her daddy. But she just says hello, goodbye."

"I guess it hurt her, all this."

"Sure."

"Man, that was the one chick I ever cared about," Porter said. "And she's gone. Forever."

"Maybe not," James said.

"Oh, yeah," Porter said. His eyes were far off, some other place. "She's gone, too," he said. "Man," he said, "I just wish I could do what you're gonna do. Even if it don't pay off. Man, anything's better than jail. Anything. Besides dyin', maybe. Anything's better."

"Well, I got to go now," James said. The guard was coming over.

"Take it easy, man," Porter said. "And bring me a little money next time. For cigarettes."

"I'll give them some out there today," James said. "I got that much."

"Take it easy, man," Porter said. His eyes were way off someplace. James knew Porter would never cry. But he looked awfully close to it.

"Goodbye, Porter," he said.

"Oh, I'll see you again," Porter said.

"Sure," James said. "Sure you will."

CHAPTER 8

It was October, cold, in the open car in the drive-in lot. But Laura had the top down. She was huddled up in her coat, drinking coffee. James had his cup, too. His fingers were warm on the cup, but his face was chilled.

"We could go inside," he said. "It's warm."

"No," she said. "It's too noisy." She looked into her cup. "I can't take all that noise," she said. She turned suddenly toward him and with her free hand took one of his.

"James," she said, "I'm sorry about all that. Avoiding you and all."

"Oh," he said.

"But I couldn't help it. It was like when I saw you, I was back in that jail."

"I know," he said.

"Oh, that jail," she said. "That was a place, that was. Poor Porter."

"He can get out in two years," James said.

"On probation," she said. "That's just great. Some guy staring over your shoulder all the time."

"It's better than jail."

"Anything is. Listen," she said, squeezing his hand, "are we going up to Fresno Friday? For the game?"

"Sure," he said, "if you want to."

"I do," she said. "That'll be fun. I've had it with books for a while."

"I like it," he said. "It's hard work, but I like it. Did you ever watch mitosis?" he said.

Laura laughed. "My what?"

"When cells divide," James said. "Girl, I look through that microscope and watch those little things. And I swear, I'm like some little kid with a new toy. It really turns me on."

"That's great," she said. "Well, college is all right."

"You'll like it better," he said. "Give it time."

"I suppose," she said. "Oh, I guess I will. Listen," she said, letting her eyes drop. "About Porter."

"Yeah," he said. He wanted to forget all that.

"I mean it happened," Laura said. "And there's nothing I can do to change that. And I won't say I didn't care about him. I did."

"Sure," James said. "I know that."

"Not the way I care about you. You know, comfortable and relaxed and all?"

"Yeah."

"But it happened," Laura said.

"I know that," James said.

"But it's better with you," Laura said. "I mean, being your girl."

"Don't write Porter about it," James said.

"I haven't written him."

"I'll tell him," James said. "I'll take care of it."

The police car slid up very quietly, next to them. It was a shock. Because it was the same two cops, the two who had arrested them last summer, along with Porter. They both got out of the car and came over.

"We haven't done anything," Laura said. "Unless drinking *coffee* is illegal."

The white cop made a face. "My partner and I," he said. "We just wanted to say hello."

"Hello," Laura said. "And goodbye."

"It'll just take a minute," the cop said. "We wanted to tell you," he said, "that we're sorry you got hung with that thing last summer."

"It was the law," Laura said. "We were guilty under the law. Isn't that the way they say it?"

"Sure," the cop said. "But it was tough, anyway. I mean, you were just sitting there. You know."

"We know," Laura said.

"Well," the cop said. "That's all we wanted to say. That we're sorry you got hung with it. And glad it didn't go any worse."

"Thanks a lot," Laura said, bitterly. She watched the cops walk off.

"You oughtn't to be like that," James said. "Those guys helped us in court. Hadn't been for them we'd maybe have gone to jail."

"Oh, yeah," Laura said. "I guess so. I'd just like to forget it all."

"Yeah," James said. "It would be nice to just wipe it all out."

"I'd better get home now," Laura said. "I have some studying to do."

"Me too." James squeezed her hand. "Listen," he said. "It's going to be all right."

"What is?"

"The whole thing. I'll get through medical school. And I'll get my license."

"I hope. I'll be an old lady by then."

"Twenty-seven," he said. "Twenty-eight."

"That's *old,*" she said, but she was smiling. "Is it?"

she said. "Is it going to be all right?"

"If I keep working," he said. "And if you hang around."

"I will," she said. "No worry about that."

James looked at her carefully.

"Well, I *will,*" she said. "I'll be around."

"We'll see," he said.

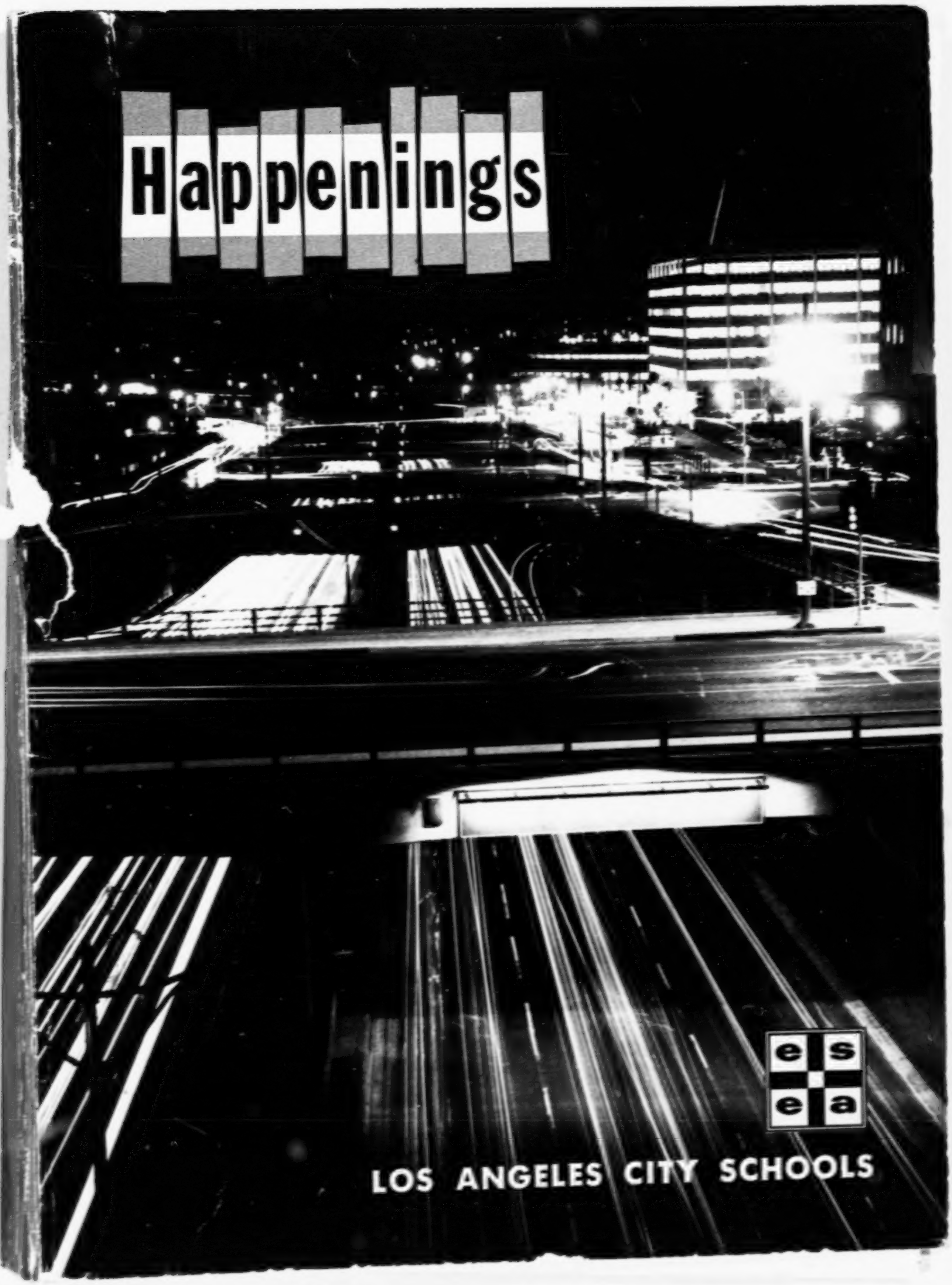
"Anyway," she said. "The world is full of girls."

"Not for me."

"Do you mean that, James?"

"I mean it."

"Well," she said, "kiss me and make me feel like you mean it. Before we go home." They kissed. And for a moment they held each other tight. It was a cold night. Up through the haze the distant stars were as cold as steel. It was a long, long haul, James thought. But he could make it.



Happenings

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LOS ANGELES CITY SCHOOLS

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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HAPPENINGS

B10 English

LOS ANGELES CITY SCHOOLS
Division of Secondary Education
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TO THE TEACHER

For years many teachers have said that urban students should have reading materials which are closer to their interests and their characteristics. All of the reading materials in this anthology were written to meet these needs for urban students in B10 English.

Every selection is presented either from a young person's point of view or with a young person's interests firmly in mind. Moreover, all of the selections were written by teachers or by writers well acquainted with the interests of young people. In addition, all selections have been taught successfully in B10 English classes and have been evaluated by consultants, supervisors, and teachers and judged in tryout by a majority of students as being readily readable, readily understandable, and highly interesting.

As an aid to teachers, the selections have been grouped to correspond with the Course of Study for B10 English. Also, a manual for teaching the selections is being prepared and will be published separately. However, even with these aids and with a literature more closely related to students' interests and characteristics, an English class still must have an enthusiastic teacher who will meet the varied needs of culturally various students in a constantly new world.

ROBERT E. KELLY
Associate Superintendent
Division of Secondary Education

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THOMAS O. LAWSON
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Specially-Funded Programs

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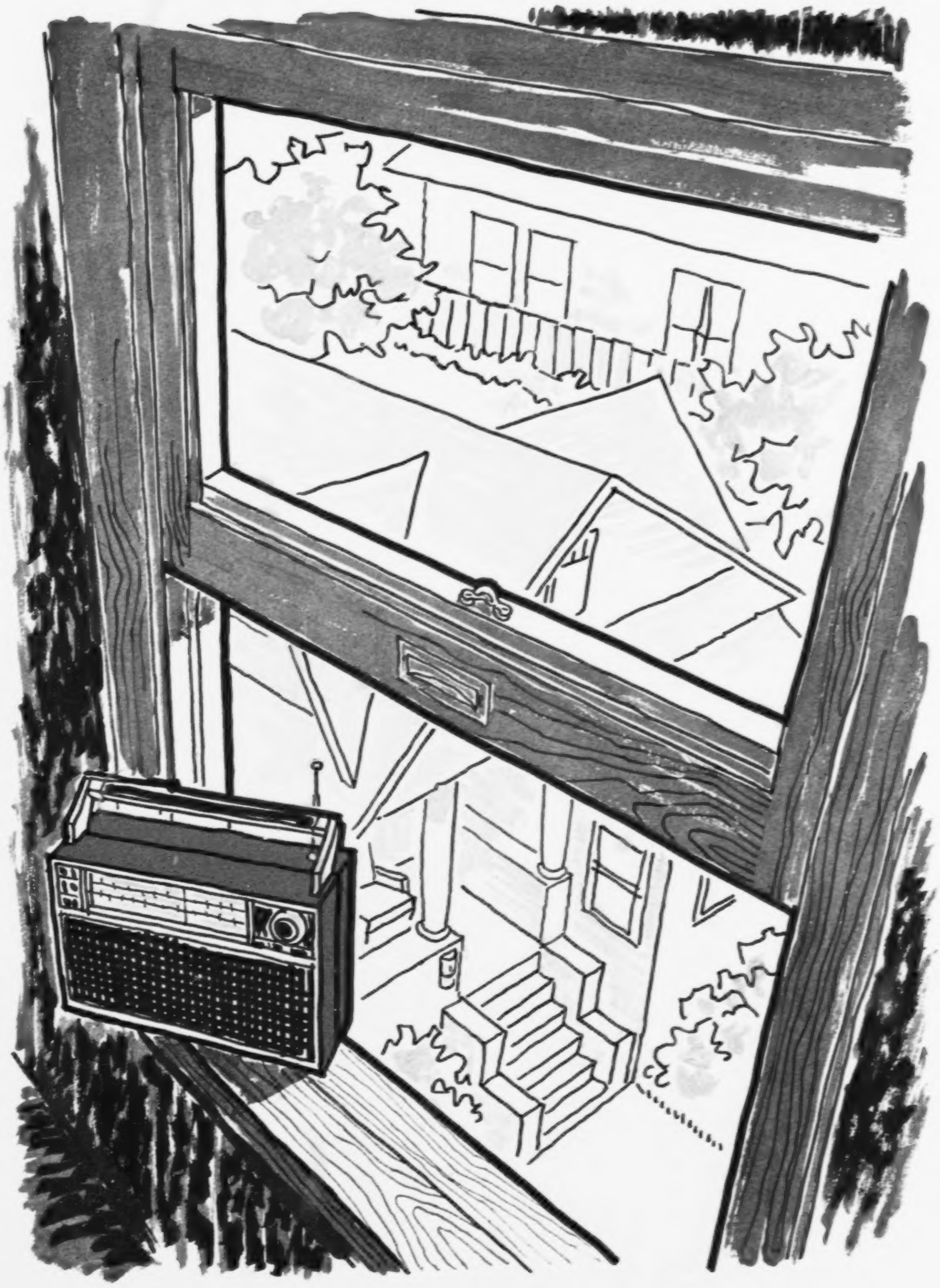
TO THE STUDENT

The stories and pieces of nonfiction in this book have been written for city high school students. Of course, we cannot expect that you will be highly interested in *every* selection. Students differ too much in their likes and dislikes for that to happen. But the selections in this book have been read by classes of city high school students, and most of them have said that the stories are readable, understandable, and interesting. Also, every selection is told from a young adult's point of view or is told with young adults firmly in mind.

We hope that you will enjoy reading this book and that you will want to talk about some of the important ideas behind the stories. We think this is important because students who enjoy reading and who want to talk about important ideas will become active, hopeful citizens in an ever-changing world.

TROUBLES



TILL THERE WAS YOU

by KATHLEEN R. SMITH

Today I threw my radio out of the window. I just walked to the window, opened it, and threw the radio out. We live on the third floor, and the crash of the radio made a lot of noise.

Nobody asked me why I did it. Dad and Mom just looked at me. My brother said, "If you didn't want it, why didn't you give it to me?"

It was the only radio I ever had. Mom and Dad saved a long time to get it for me. But they didn't ask why I threw it out of the window. I think they knew.

You know how you will hear the same song over and over? There is a song called "Till There Was You." They played it a lot last year when I was going with Carol. Today they played it over and over. I don't want to think about Carol.

Last year Carol was a new girl in school. There was a dance, and some of the girls asked me to take Carol.

"She's new here," Betty said. "You'll like her."

Well, I took Carol. She lived in this old apartment, but she seemed to think it was nice. So I guess she had lived in worse.

At first I didn't think she was pretty. Only at first. She had long black hair and those big dark eyes. She was little and thin. When she smiled I knew she was the prettiest girl I had ever seen.

Carol liked to dance. She liked jazz. She liked folk songs. She liked all the things I liked, even baseball.

That was a great year. We rode in my old car. Once it broke down, and we walked home. Even that was fun.

We watched TV at my house. Mom fixed things Carol liked to eat. Once Mom made her a dress. They liked each other.

We talked about what we wanted to be. Carol was going to be a nurse. I was going to be a coach. Oh, we were going places.

We saw each other every day. Once she was sick for two days. When I saw her she said, "Is it two days or two years?"

Whenever we heard that song, Carol would sing it. She sang fine. And she would look at me out of the corner of her eye.

Everybody called us Carol and Paul. Carol and Paul, as if it were one name.

Then a man in New York died. You wouldn't think a man none of us knew could change things. But he did. He had been a friend of Carol's grandfather. He left his money to Carol's father.

They didn't know how much money he had left. They hoped it would pay some bills and buy a new car.

Carol's father was a bad luck man. He got jobs and lost them. He would buy a car, and it would be junk. Nothing went well for him–till he got this money. There was a lot of money, money to buy a house, money to keep bad luck away.

When I went over there, her mother said, "Carol's going with us," "Carol has to get a new dress," or "Not today, Paul."

They talked about buying a house. I didn't see Carol as much. They went driving around looking for a house. There were nice houses near us, but they got a house way out in the valley.

"Carol," I said, "that's too far for my old car to go. I can't come to see you every day."

"It's not that far," she said.

In a few weeks they were gone. Her father and mother didn't say, "Come and see us."

Carol said, "I'll write."

"Every day," I said.

Time went by. Carol didn't write. Every day I came home I said to Mom, "Any mail?"

"No," she said.

I fixed my car. I said, "I'm going to see Carol."

Mom said, "Wait till they ask you."

"Why wait? Carol wants to see me too," I said.

I drove. The car worked fine. I got to Carol's house. It was new and big with lots of green grass. You could have put our apartment in one little part of it. I rang the bell. Carol's mother came.

"Oh, it's you," she said.

Carol came. She looked pretty. She looked like Carol.

"Hi," she said.

They had a swimming pool. We went out and sat by it. Some kids were there. Some had radios. Some were swimming. I sat by Carol. She didn't talk much. I told her about school and all the kids. She didn't act as if she wanted to hear about them.

Maybe her mother didn't want me there. Did Carol?

"Carol," I said, "why didn't you write?"

She turned away. "I didn't have time," she said.

"Look, Carol, this is Paul! What's wrong?"

She didn't say anything. Some kid with a radio came up.

"Carol," he said, "do you like the way they are doing this song?"

Three girls were singing "Till There Was You." I looked at Carol, but she looked away. Then I knew. I got up.

"I'll be going now," I said.

She didn't say, "Stay."

"Goodbye" was all she said.

So it was all over. A man nobody ever heard of died. And it all ended. They got money, and money ended things for Carol and me. I was the same, but Carol was not. I can still hear her say "Hi" when I went to see her. Not "Hi, Paul." Not "Has it been a whole year?" Just "Hi."

I was doing O.K. till I heard that song on my radio. So I threw it out the window. I threw a whole year out the window with it.

NEVER SAID A MUMBLING WORD

by FRANK BONHAM

Ray loafed in his rumpled bed, pleasantly dazed with sleep. Soon his mother would come in and say, "I'm leaving for work, Raymond. Pile out of there." Then he would hear her walking up the block to catch her bus. After a while he would crawl out, yawning, scratching, and smiling to himself.

All Saturday ahead! Great day, all day.

But suddenly his mother's voice and that of a man struck across his sense of well-being. The man said angrily: "Where you get the money is your problem, Mrs. Cole. You owe for three months. That's ninety dollars."

"Mr. Johnson," said Ray's mother, "you lied to me–don't say you didn't. You told me those vitamin pills would cost four dollars a month. And now you say thirty!"

The noise pulled the boy up out of sleep like a hooked trout. Trouble talk. . . . Fighting it, he buried his face in the pillow; only his hair and one ear showed. But the hard voices followed him.

"Let's not start bad-mouthing me, Mrs. Cole," warned the man. "I can bad-mouth too. Unless I see some money by Monday morning, I'll have to go to the law."

The screen door banged. Hard heels clacked away. An engine started. Worry crept into Ray's brain like a worm. The bad feeling went all through him. He raised the torn green shade to look out. A yellow Ford with *Super D Vitamins* in a green circle on the door was pulling away.

Ray groaned and padded into the living room, wearing the shorts he had slept in. He was fifteen, long-legged, lean and graceful. His mother was not in sight, but he heard her singing a hymn in the kitchen.

"They nailed Him to the tree,
But He never said a mumbling word."

Like many women, she sang hymns when she was troubled. More spirituals got sung that way on Orchard Street than in church. Walking into the kitchen, Ray frowned at her. She was having a last cup of coffee, singing and stirring. Her hat was on her head, and her purse lay on the table.

"What's going on?" Ray asked.

Her sad but peaceful mood broke. She sighed. "That man," she said. "That evil Jackson Johnson."

"Why do you keep signing papers for things?" Ray demanded.

"I didn't mean to buy those vitamins forever, Raymond. And he told me they'd only cost four dollars. But the way he reads the paper now, it comes to thirty! The poor get poorer, and the rich get richer," she sighed.

He trailed her into the living room. What bothered him most was that she never fought back. They cheated her on everything she bought. She paid all but a few dollars on something–then they hauled it away. But, like Jesus, she never said a mumbling word.

"What'll he do?" Ray asked.

Mrs. Cole said: "There's dried limas in the cupboard. Put them on to cook real slow. Ham hock in the ice box–cook it with the beans. –You know what he'll do," she said. As she passed the new table-top television set, bought with cash for once, she gave it a loving touch of her fingers.

Ray looked sadly at the TV. So long ball games, he thought; adios, *Late, Late Show*. Monday night, once again, he would be the only boy on the street without a television set.

Ray ate some cold cereal. Great day, he thought gloomily. When a horn honked before the house, he went out on the porch. An old Buick, long and heavy as a warship, was parked there. Four boys in it yelled at him.

"Come on, man! Junior's got his mother's car! We're going cruising."

Ray's best friend, Junior Collins, honked the horn and waved. Ray put a few things in his jeans' pockets, pulled on a tee shirt, and ran out. He got in back with two other boys. A husky boy with dimples, Junior smiled at Ray.

"Man, if your face was any longer," he said, "you could sell blues by the yard. What's up?"

Ray told them, while Junior drove. The boys talked angrily of things that should happen to salesmen like Jackson Johnson. Curtis Wood said: "Why don't we all jump him tonight? He works South Park area all Saturday, doesn't he?"

"Yeah, great," Ray scoffed. "And all get booked at Juvenile together."

"You better get Monk Matthews to give you a reading," Junior said. "He'll tell you what to do. Monk's a hundred percent."

Ray was not so sure about Monk, a fat man who passed his time shooting pool and reading fortunes. Since there was often fringe on his own cuff, Ray doubted whether he had any better eye for the future than anybody else. But for a few coins on the line he could find out. He could not just sit around waiting for Johnson to move on his mother.

Monk was practicing pool shots in the Fifty-Fifty Snooker Parlor. The boys held their breath as he tried a tricky three-cushion shot. He made it and flashed a grin at them. "How you all, friends?" he asked.

"Fine," they said. Then Ray explained his problem.

"Hard times," said Monk. "Why don't you lay a dollar on the green and let me read the future for you?"

All Ray had was sixty-five cents. Monk shook his head. "Nothing moves but money."

Junior and the others pooled the rest of the money, and Monk racked the balls, placed the cue ball on the spot, and handed Ray the special cue with *Good Luck* set into it in brass letters. "Now you break the balls," he said.

Ray chewed his lip, sawed the cue back and forth, and broke the balls with a hard crack. They scattered around the table. One of them dropped.

"Hoo-eee!" said Monk. "You dropped the eight-ball. That's bad, lad. But I like the way the seven and three lay. That's ten, and this is the tenth, and here's what that means. . . ."

He took Ray into a corner and whispered: "Means you got to throw a bad scare into this dude. Scare him so he won't bother your mother any more. All you do is this. . . ."

Ray was excited and only a little bit scared. The plan was simple and great, and ought to work. It was as practical as a pistol, but just as dangerous if he got caught.

"Let me know how it works out," Monk said, patting his arm.

"Will you bring me hard candy if it doesn't?" Ray asked.

"I like your spirit, boy," Monk laughed.

Junior drove Ray home, where he got one of the dozens of vitamin jars out of the cupboard. Then they cruised the South Park area until, beneath a drooping pepper tree, Ray saw the yellow Ford parked. He got out hastily.

"One-man job," he said.

Leaning against the tree, he waited. Soon he saw Johnson walk from one house to another and knock at the door. He was a big, catlike man, and dressed very sharp. When the door opened, he swept off his narrow-brimmed hat in a manner that practically made the sale with lady customers. That hat had cost his mother ninety dollars already.

With Johnson busy, Ray slipped behind the yellow coupe and unscrewed the cap of the gas tank.

"Dump a jar of vitamins in his gas tank," Monk had said. *"That'll foul up his engine in about a block. While he's trying to start it, move in and say, 'I've got enough of your pills to keep you walking all winter, man. I'll hex you to death with them, unless you leave my old lady alone.' "*

Ray's heart bumped. It was wrong–just as wrong as Johnson's tricks, and he could go to jail for it. But he was set on stopping Johnson. His hands shook as he removed the lid from the jar of vitamins. Before he got it off, he heard the soft whir of tires, and turned his head quickly. A black and white car silently pulled up beside him, its two aerials trembling. Two officers wearing white-crowned caps stared out at him.

Ray choked on his fear. He hesitated. But all a boy with a gas-tank cap in his hand needed to know about the police was that they were bad news. He dropped the cap and ran.

Plowing through a dusty tangle of plants, he raced between two houses to an alley. He looked both ways. An officer shouted. Keys and coins jingled as he followed. Ray ducked left, sprinting between rickety fences and back-yard gardens, and skidded into a side street. Tires squealed. The running officer was closing in as the car passed Ray; it cut to the curb, stopped, and the driver jumped out.

Ray halted; there was no use running. It was foolish to run in the first place. The officers came at him warily, as though the jar of pills he still held might be a bomb.

Monk, you old phony! he thought bitterly. *Maybe you better go out of the advice business.*

One of the officers took the pills from Ray. “Looks like Red Devils,” he said to his partner.

“No, sir!” Ray said, in alarm. “They aren't dope. They're just vitamins.”

“Oh, sure,” said the officer. “We'll put them in the squad room. Anytime we're feeling tired, we'll drop a couple and feel great.”

At the police station, Ray sat for an hour in a small room with lockers lining the walls. A grinning trusty brought him a coke; he was drinking it at a metal-topped table when the officer brought a big man in a gray suit to the room. The new man, a plainclothesman, wore a frown. He had heavy brows that met above his eyes. Ray shivered. This was probably the wrecking crew, to make him talk.

“This is Sergeant Brady,” said the uniformed officer. “He'll ask

Sergeant Brady sat across from Ray and looked at him. He rattled the pills in the jar. “So they're only vitamins,” he said. “But putting them in a gas tank is still against the law, brother.”

Ray tried an alibi. “I thought I knew the guy that owned the car, Sergeant. I was just going to play a trick–”

Sergeant Brady picked up a telephone. “Send a car over,” he growled into it. “I'm taking him to Juvenile–”

“No, wait!” Ray sighed. “I'll tell you all about it. . . .”

The sergeant patiently wrote it all down–about Jackson Johnson, his miracle pills, and the thirty-a-month contract. Then he scratched his head.

"It's going to be hard to prove anything against him, Ray," he said. "Your mother shouldn't have signed that paper. And for all I know, you're the one that's lying instead of him. What did he say the pills would do for you?"

Ray told him some of the things Super D was supposed to deliver, but never did. The pills would help him with his homework, his mother's knees wouldn't ache when she walked, and her hair would look like a movie star's. Sergeant Brady drew a square on a scratch pad, made up his mind.

"I think I know this guy," he said. "He was using the name of McCullern last year. Maybe we can bag him, if we work together, Ray. Are you busy this afternoon?"

Ray grinned. "Got nothing but time, Sergeant."

In a battered Volkswagen, they cruised the area around South Park. The car was old and dirty, but under the dashboard was a police radio: it was an unmarked police car. Ray held a small poster covered with buttons like Red Cross pins, with the words, *Support Mental Health–Give!* at the top. Each pin was lettered: *I Gave.*

"Get him to give you a donation," the sergeant said. "Then pin a button on him, and come back to the car."

Ray was puzzled. What good was all that going to do? Suddenly he straightened up. "There's his car!" The Ford was parked halfway down the block. He could see Johnson on a front porch with his briefcase beside him. Sergeant Brady parked. Johnson left the porch and walked to the house next door.

The sergeant slapped Ray's knee. "Go, man! Start at this corner and work towards him. Hit all the houses, so everything will look right."

Carrying the card and a slotted can for donations, Ray knocked at two doors. At one house he was given a dime. He and Johnson arrived on the porch of a green house at the same time. Johnson frowned at Ray's poster and made a quick thumb gesture.

"Buzz off, Buster," he warned. "I'm working this side of the street."

"Me, too," said Ray. "I'm supposed to hit every house for a donation, mister. How about you?" He rattled the can. "Support Mental Health?"

The con man looked him over with distrust. "Do I know you, boy?" he asked.

Ray cringed a little. But he said with a broad smile: "Could be. Got a lot of friends around here. This is a mighty good cause, mister. I'd be much obliged for your donation."

Inside the house, footsteps approached the door.

Johnson quickly dug into his pocket. "Reckon somebody better," he muttered, "cause the streets seem to be full of idiots today."

His quarter clunked into the can just as the door opened. A tall, thin woman with a dust rag in her hand looked out at them. Hastily, Ray hooked the *I Gave* pin in the man's lapel. Then he took off fast.

When he got back to the Volkswagen, Sergeant Brady was listening to a transistor radio while a tape recorder spun. "Good going!" the sergeant said. "Listen to the man rave–"

Over the radio, Jackson Johnson's voice said, "I take a vow, Missus Lee–your boy won't have no more skin trouble, once he's on Super D. And them headaches of yours–things of the past, madam. The doctors have put a price on my head 'cause I'm running them out of business."

Ray heard the woman say: "How much are those pills, Mr. Johnson? They sound real fine."

"Four dollars a month, ma'am–nickels and dimes, a penny a day."

The sergeant chuckled and turned down the radio. "Smile, Mr. Johnson," he said. "You're on Candid Microphone."

Ray stared at the tape recorder and the radio. "How do you do that?"

"That *I Gave* button had a bug in it, Ray—a little radio sending set. We're picking up Johnson's program. We've been getting reports about him for so long that I finally got permission from Judge Connors today to use a bug on him. I'll let him hit a few more houses before I call for a car."

The smoggy sky was deepening into night when Ray and the policemen left the station. In an upstairs room, Jackson Johnson, still wearing the Mental Health button, was listening to himself on the tape recorder, and denying all. The plainclothesman drove Ray home. His mother came to the door, took one look at the officer, and knew he was the law.

"Raymond, I swear to My Father—! What have you done? I take an oath, Officer, he's never been in trouble before."

Ray grinned. "I've been playing Junior G-Man, Ma."

The sergeant laughed. "I'll let the boy tell you about it, Mrs. Cole. But take my advice—call Better Business Bureau the next time you get that paper-signing fever. Or call us."

The beans and ham-hock were overcooked, but everything tasted good to Ray. The great day had worn him out. His mother kept asking how-come the police had picked him up in the first place, but he would change the subject each time. At last Ray sat back and patted his stomach.

"Good chow, old lady," he said. She followed him into the living room.

"You going out with Junior and those boys tonight?"

Ray turned the television set on, propped his feet on the table beside it, and got comfortable. "Nope. Thought I'd see what's on TV, long as we still got a set. Like as not you'll be buying a new deep-freeze next week, and we'll lose the thing again."

Mrs. Cole sat down and folded her hands in her lap. "No, I've learned a good lesson this time, Raymond," she said. "Never again."

But a few minutes later, she leaned forward eagerly. A man on the screen was standing by a sewing machine, thumping it with his hand and talking hard.

"Turn up the sound, Raymond," Mrs. Cole suggested. "That machine the man's selling looks real good."

Ray sighed. With a shake of his head, he flipped to another channel.

A LIGHT IN THE WINDOW

by ROBERT J. FRANKLIN

Ernesto Rodriguez lay in his sleeping bag close to the hot wood coals of the campfire and stared up at the stars through the tall pine trees. No wind stirred the pine needles, and with the clear sky and no clouds to hold in the earth's warm air, Ernesto knew that their mountain campsite at 8,000 feet would be covered with frost before morning.

"Papa, you asleep?" he said to his father who lay on the other side of the fire.

"Yes," his father said for a joke.

Ernesto giggled. "You talking in your sleep, Papa?"

"Only when it's safe, way out here in the mountains," his father said and laughed. "One time I thought I'd play a joke on your mama. At night, I pretended to be asleep. Then I said, 'Oh, Juanita, you are so beautiful. I love you. I cannot live without you. Kiss me, again.' "

"Who is Juanita?" Ernesto asked.

"I don't know," his father said, "but your mama got no sense of humor. Wham! She punched me in the nose. It bled all over. She's a wildcat, your mama, when she gets mad." He chuckled to himself.

They were silent a few moments. Then Mr. Rodriguez said, "What's on your mind, son? You want to talk?"

"Yes," Ernesto said, but he had to think a while to get the right words. His father waited quietly. "Papa, sometimes I worry what I'm going to do when I get older. When school starts in a couple of weeks, I'm going to be in the eleventh grade. I ain't so smart. I get "D" in everything except autoshop and gym. I flunked English and gotta take it over . . ." Ernesto paused a few seconds and was afraid to say what was on his mind. Then he got up his courage, took a deep breath, and let the words tumble out in a rush—"I don't like school; I want to quit and get a job."

Mr. Rodriguez did not say anything.

Ernesto went on, "School's just a waste of time. I don't understand the books, and when the teachers ask me questions, I don't know the answers. So, I make jokes and the other kids laugh, and the teachers get mad. Maybe it's better I quit before I get kicked out . . ."

Mr. Rodriguez asked, "Do the other kids understand?"

"I guess so," Ernesto said. "If I was smart like some of them, I'd like some kind of important job like a doctor or lawyer or something. Then I could get married and raise a big family and take good care of them." Now Ernesto sounded very worried. "How am I gonna do anything if I'm dumb?"

Mr. Rodriguez understood. He wanted to go over and put his arms around the boy and hug him, but Ernesto was going on sixteen and was too big for that. It might embarrass the boy. He said gently, "I'll tell you one thing, Ernesto. Get it out of your head that you are dumb. Maybe you ain't so smart in school work, but if you were dumb, you wouldn't think about things like being able to take care of a family. You ain't dumb or I wouldn't buy you a gun and take you hunting since you were twelve. You got good horse sense."

Ernesto thought about that for a while. A shooting star zipped across the sky and disappeared. Finally he said, "How did you do it, Papa? You never went to school, but you married Mama and took care of our family." He almost said the word *family* with sadness because the three younger ones were girls. "How did you do it?" he repeated.

Ernesto's father was not one for talking a lot, but he did *think* a lot. "You see all those millions of stars?" he began. "Each one has its own special place in the sky. It's like people. Each man and woman, boy and girl has a special place. It's like a mystery. Nobody knows why he's here, but it must be for some good reason. I think, maybe, everybody wonders how he's going to make out in the world, and somehow everything falls into place, and he makes out okay if he's a good person. I used to wonder too."

Mr. Rodriguez told has son about his life. It was the first time he had ever told him. He told how his own mother and father followed the crops, always working, always moving. His two brothers and three sisters worked alongside him and his parents, as far back as he could remember. Only once in a while did they ever stay anywhere long enough to go to school for more than a couple of weeks at a time. A few times they stayed in one place a whole month. They picked cotton in the Imperial Valley, olives and citrus fruit in the San Fernando Valley, cotton and grapes in the San Joaquin Valley around Bakersfield and Dinuba, and then they would travel as far north as Washington State to pick apples.

He told Ernesto how they traveled with dozens of other migrant families. Most of the work was done stooping over to handpick crops close to the ground. At the end of every day they were so tired that they were ready to drop. When the harvests were good, they ate well. When work was scarce, they sometimes went without eating.

"When I was a young kid, I never understood how bad things were. I wish I could have gone to school more, so I could help you with the books. Sometimes we'd only be enrolled one or two days, and we'd come back to the camp, and my father would have the old truck loaded up and toss us on top of the old mattresses, and away we'd go without even a chance to say good-bye to the teacher."

Ernesto listened to his father with great interest. "How come you didn't keep following the crops?" he asked. "I think it would be fun traveling, always going someplace new."

Mr. Rodriguez said, "You don't know, Son. Maybe for experience it's okay, but not for a lifetime. When I was seventeen my father died from blood poisoning he got helping a farmer repair a rusty barbed wire fence. My mother died six months later–I think from a broken heart. She loved my father very much. Then the county social worker came and put my brothers and sisters in a home for orphans. I was the oldest and lied about my age–told them I was nineteen–and joined the army because we just got into World War II."

"That was too bad about your brothers and sisters," Ernesto said sadly.

"No," his father said. "It was good. They got a place to sleep and three square meals a day, and they went to school. My sisters grew up and married nice fellows. My brother Ernesto–you are named after him–grew old enough to leave the orphanage before the war ended. He got killed in the Battle of the Bulge in Belgium. My youngest brother Felipe got killed in Korea . . . "

Ernesto said, "How come you never told me these things before?"

"You never asked before," his father answered.

"You still have not told me why you quit following the crops," Ernesto said.

Mr. Rodriguez thought back to the exact time he decided to start a new life. "When I was in training, before I went overseas to war, sometimes we took night marches through the fields and little towns in the South, and I'd see the lights shining through the windows of the little houses and the families sitting together around the dinner tables, and I used to say to myself, 'Someday, maybe, if I stay alive through the war, I'm going to get me a little house with a family to sit together around the table.' " The father explained, "In all my life, up to that time, I never lived in a house, and all of a sudden I felt like I never belonged anywhere . . . and, Son, I wanted to belong somewhere."

"Why, Papa?" Ernesto asked. "Why do you have to belong somewhere?"

Mr. Rodriguez thought about that for a while to find the right words. "I guess it's a feeling people get. For a while it's fun to float around like a dandelion seed in the wind, but sooner or later it gets lonely floating around alone. A fellow wants somebody to love him, and he wants to love somebody and put down roots. It's human nature."

Oh, I used to know your Mama when our families picked crops together. We were always good friends, but I never thought about marrying her until I saw those families sitting together at the table. We weren't much good at writing, but we managed, with the help of friends, to decide things through the mail. When I got back, three years later, she was still waiting, so we got married."

"Were you in love, like in the movies?" Ernesto asked seriously.

"Ha! You are getting nosy," his father said.

"Were you?" Ernesto insisted.

Mr. Rodriguez thought a moment. "Not like in cheap movies where the love is not proper," he said. "Only a fool thinks love is like a cheap movie. Love is to be happy with someone, to want to be with them all the time. It is the way I have always felt about your mother, and also it is the way I feel about you and your sisters."

"Papa . . . "

"Yes, Ernesto?"

"That is the way I feel about you, also."

Mr. Rodriguez felt a warm glow in his heart. "I am glad, Ernesto," he said simply. "Now, let us sleep or we won't be able to get up to catch the deer early at the spring." He put a small log on the glowing coals and rolled over with his back to the fire.

Ernesto knew the talk was over, but he did not go to sleep right away. It was a good talk with his father—the best talk he had ever had. He stared up at the stars. How lucky I am, he thought, to have such a father. I think, maybe, I will try harder not to be so dumb in school. I think, maybe, I will not make stupid jokes with the teachers. I think it will please Papa if I do not talk more about quitting school. I think I will work with Papa in his landscaping work, making things pretty with trees and flowers and bushes and green lawns around houses. I will be a good worker and take care of a good wife, and I will have a son to take hunting, like Papa. Yes, I would like to be like Papa.

The stars began to whirl in a funny way in the sky. They circled around one star that got bigger and bigger and seemed to turn into a lighted window of a little house. And through the window Ernesto Rodriguez could see a happy family seated around the dinner table. He saw himself at the head of the table, and he fell asleep with a smile.

GIRLFRIEND

by **LORENZ GRAHAM**

Steve didn't have a girlfriend. He liked some of the girls but he didn't go steady.

Joe Jackson had a girl, Christine, and she was all right—for Joe, that is. And Christine had friends. Christine and Joe tried to get Steve interested in some of them. Steve just didn't like them enough.

"When I see one I really like," Steve said, "I'll probably go steady. But I'll pick her out myself. Most of these chicks don't move me."

Steve remembered one girl, but she was gone now. He would

Steve remembered one girl, but she was gone now. He would think about her. He thought maybe he would never see another girl like her. He wished she had not gone away.

Steve was just 15 when he met Mary Alice Williams. She was in his English class. She was real nice. Before he really knew her, he liked the way she walked and the way she dressed and the way she talked. She wasn't fast. She was kind of cool, and she took everything easy. She was smart too, and Mr. Mills—that was the English teacher—kind of favored her. She wasn't the smartest girl in the class but she knew the answers all right, and Mr. Mills said she read with expression. He called on her a lot, and when there was something to put on the board, he would have Mary Alice write it.

Steve liked the way Mary Alice looked when she was writing on the board. Her hair always looked good from the back, and with one hand raised up, her whole body seemed to move with the hand. It was like she was dancing. She had nice legs too. Steve wanted to know her better.

Mary Alice didn't seem to go with a crowd. She didn't have a boyfriend, either.

One of the fellows that seemed to like her was Bill Gordon. Bill's dad had a liquor store, and Bill always had money. He was 16, and he could drive his dad's car. All the girls liked him, or maybe they just liked his car. Some of them would go riding with him any time he asked them. Steve never saw Mary Alice in Bill's car.

One day Bill showed up at the school wearing some real sharp slacks. They were tapered real fine. Even Steve had to admit it. Lots of the fellows were looking at them and talking about them. The girls, too, were saying how good they looked.

"Course you can't buy them like that," Bill said. "I got a French tailor downtown. He's the only one in town that can do a job like that. He makes my dad's clothes."

That was on a Friday. Steve needed a new pair of slacks, but he knew he would never be able to pay for a French tailor to make them for him. The next morning, Saturday, Steve's mother gave him the Dollar Store credit card so he could buy his slacks. He walked over to the main street and when he was almost at the Dollar Store, he saw Mary Alice walking in front of him. Mary Alice stopped to look in the window.

"You shopping today?" Steve asked.

"Steve," she said, sounding real pleased. "My dad's going to Chicago, and I want to buy a nice sport shirt for him. Maybe you can help me pick out something he would like."

Steve was willing, and together they looked at things in the window.

"My dad always wears such plain things," Mary Alice said. "I want him to have something real nice, something with nice colors but not too loud."

They didn't see anything that she wanted in the window, so Steve went into the store with her. It was fun helping her pick out just the right thing. She did get a shirt that Steve liked. It was a kind of blue-gray color with dark blue lines forming squares and thin yellow lines close beside the dark blue ones. It had a good collar. Steve liked the way it curled, and the points were not too long. The man said it was the latest thing. When Steve said he had to buy something too, Mary Alice smiled.

"Well, you helped me, so maybe I can help you now," Mary Alice said.

Steve didn't think much of having a girl help him pick out slacks, but he did tell her what he was looking for. She went right along with him to the men's department. He couldn't tell her to leave him.

"I'd like to get something kind of tapered the way they're wearing them now," he said.

"You mean like Bill Gordon's?" she asked.

"Well, course he had those made special for him," Steve said. "They wouldn't have anything like that here."

"Oh, that's what Bill Gordon said," Mary Alice said, laughing. "You don't believe that stuff about some French tailor, do you?"

"Well, that's what he said, and I never saw any others tapered just like those," Steve said.

"Why, I'll bet his mother did that job for him," Mary Alice said. "They are easy to do. You could do it yourself."

Steve had to laugh. He really thought that was funny. Mary Alice kept saying that anybody could do that. She said she could take most any slacks and do the same thing.

"I'll tell you what," she said. "You get the slacks that you want and come over to my house and I'll show you how easy it is."

Steve really didn't believe her, but he did get some part-Dacron slacks that the man said were tapered. They weren't really tapered, but that's what the man said they were.

Steve had never been to Mary Alice's home. She lived on Woodward Street, and it was a nice neighborhood. The house was nice inside, too. Mary Alice told him that her mother was a dressmaker and that her mother had taught her lots of things about sewing. She made all her own clothes–or almost all of them. Steve remembered she always looked real good in her clothes, and if Mary Alice made them herself, then she really did know what she was doing. Mary Alice's mother was real nice about tapering the slacks.

She said, "So now you are going to start taking in work. Okay, I won't charge you for the space. I just charge rent for equipment."

Everybody laughed and Mary Alice went out of the room while Steve put the slacks on. Then she came back and did something with pins.

After Steve changed and gave her the new slacks, she ripped out the seams and did some sewing. When she was through, she went into the kitchen and pressed the slacks. Steve put them on again. They really did look good. They looked just as good as Bill Gordon's, maybe better.

It was hard to wait until Monday when he would be showing off his new slacks.

And when he did show up at Van Buren High, everybody did say how cool he looked. He wore the plaid jacket with his slacks and a fresh white shirt.

"They call them tapers," he said.

Mary Alice was standing near him, but she didn't say anything.

"Man, where did you find them?" one of the boys asked.

"Well, you just got to know where to look," Steve said. He didn't want to say he picked them up at the Dollar Store. When English class was over, some of the guys were talking about the slacks again, and he heard Mary Alice say, "I guess Steve Merrywood found Bill Gordon's French tailor."

Steve thought he had never seen a girl like Mary Alice. He thought it would be real nice to have her as a steady. He didn't say anything right away.

She always rode the bus home from school, and Steve always walked home. In the building he did talk with her, but it was always just about little things–their class work and things like that. Each time after he talked to her, he wished he had said something real nice, something that would be like making some time with her. She told him that her dad liked the shirt and that he had taken it on his trip to Chicago. Another time she told him she was real busy helping her mother, who had to make some dresses for a wedding. He wanted to ask for her telephone number, but he was afraid that he would not know what to say if he did call her.

Then one day she did not come to school.

Steve was worried. He thought she might be sick. He wished then he had gotten her phone number. He could have called her up to ask how she was.

He heard about it that evening at the dinner table.

"That was a real bad accident," his mother said. "All those people being killed."

Steve hadn't heard about any accident.

His mother went on, "That's why I wouldn't want to go flying. If God had meant man to fly he would have given them wings. That's what the preacher used to say. I guess he was right. One of the men who was killed lived on Woodward Street. I guess maybe he was a colored man."

Steve jumped. He knew it was just about time for Mr. Williams to be coming back from Chicago.

"Who was it, Mom?" he asked.

"Oh, I don't know the name. It was in the paper."

Steve jumped up from the table and ran over to the Jackson house. They took the evening paper. At the Jacksons, he got the paper and saw the headlines about the accident where 76 people were killed. All the names were there. William J. Williams, whose address was just about where Mary Alice lived, was at the bottom of the list.

A little while later Steve stood on the sidewalk in front of Mary Alice's house. All the lights were on. Cars were out in front. People were coming and going. Steve wanted to go in, but he did not know what he would say. He didn't know what to say to a girl whose father had been killed.

Mary Alice did not come back to school. Steve did not see her again. Mary Alice and her mother moved away. He heard they moved to Chicago, where they had relatives.

Steve lost his girlfriend. He knew inside he would never know another girl like Mary Alice.

THE LETTER

by KATHLEEN R. SMITH

I got a letter from my brother, Al, today. It came one month after he was killed in the war.

It was the first letter I ever got from Al. He wrote a lot of letters, but this was the only one he wrote to me. The other letters were for all of us–Mom, me, and Mike, my little brother.

When Al was at home, he was the boss. He was four years older than I. When I was sixteen, he was twenty. Anything I did, Al was on my back. It was, "Jim, where did you go?" "Who were you with?" "What did you do?"

Whatever I did, it was always wrong to Al. Oh, I got into things. There was a bad time just before Al went into the army. He didn't like my friends. He had a lot to say about them, none of it good. He didn't stop with saying things.

Al bossed all of us, even Mom. Mom was a good cook, but she didn't like housework. Maybe she was too tired when she got home from work. The place would get to be a mess.

Then Al would start in.

"We are going to clean up this place. All of us. NOW. Jim, Mike, you help."

We all helped. Mom never seemed to mind. She smiled and said, "I guess I have let things go."

When Al went into the army, they made him a boss there, too. He was a sergeant. I guess the men liked him, even if he did boss them. We got a lot of letters from them after Al died.

Al didn't say much about the war in his letters home. Here's what he wrote.

> Hi, Everybody,
>
> I am fine. Hope you are too. It's hot here and dirty. Speaking of dirt, isn't it about time you cleaned the place up? Mike, I don't like what I hear about you in school. Jim, don't play my records. Don't wear my clothes. I don't like that kid, Bill, you're going around with. I know him. Who is Pete?
>
> Well, write soon. Tell me what you are doing.
>
> Love,
> Al

You see? He was far away, across a big ocean. He was still bossing us. Funny thing was, we'd all get to work and clean up the house.

He never told us what he was doing. He just wrote about us. He wanted lots of letters. Mom wrote that she never had much to say. Maybe he was tired of reading the same old things. He wrote back.

> Hi, Everybody,
>
> No, I don't get tired of the same old things. The same old things are what I want to hear about. You didn't say if you cleaned the house. Don't get a new stove. They can fix the old one. Sorry you have been sick. Jim, that Pete sounds OK. Not Bill.
>
> Love,
> Al

We got the news that Al was killed over there. It didn't seem real to me. I was always waiting for Al to walk in. We all were waiting. For so long, Al had told us what to do and what not to do. Now nobody cared.

So the house didn't get cleaned. I ran around with the old crowd. Who cared? Mike was getting out of line. It came to me that Al bossed us because he cared. Al cared a lot.

Even fighting a war, Al cared about us. Now Al was gone.

Then I got the letter. Mom didn't say a word. She just gave me the letter and turned away. Al wrote the letter the day before he was killed. It said:

> Hi, Jim,
>
> I want to tell you that you can play my records. You can wear my clothes. They will fit you now. Jim, I don't know how to say this. I know you didn't like it, but somebody had to be the boss at home. When I was there, I was the boss. Now I'm not there. Who knows what tomorrow brings? You are the boss now, Jim. OK?
>
> Love,
> Al

Now the waiting was over. I knew what Al wanted us to do. I knew what I had to do.

"Mom," I said, "let's clean this place up. Mike, where do you think you're going?"

"I'm going out," said Mike.

"No, you're not," I said. "You're going to help. And after this I want to know where you're going and what you are doing. OK?"

They looked at me.

"OK," said Mom.

"OK," said Mike.

"OK, Al," I whispered.

THE ELECTION

by BETTE HARRELL

With his head held high, Jim walked across the Weston High campus. Beads of sweat glistened on his forehead. His fists were clenched into tight knots and his teeth were clamped together so tightly that he could feel the pressure in his temples. I'm not going to let them laugh me down, he thought.

At lunch the day before, he had made his decision. Sam, his best friend, had sat across the lunch table from him as usual. "There are a lot of things about this school that need changing," Jim had said.

"Yeah? What, man?" Sam flashed a broad grin at him.

Jim was quiet for a while. Then he said, "Well, I think the students should have more to say about what the dress standards should be. And, well, frankly, I think we should start trying to get the Negro and the white kids to mix more. Have you ever noticed that they stand together in little color groups all over the campus, but the groups don't mix?"

Sam nodded and sneered, "So you don't like the way the school is run. What are you going to do about it? What can *you* do about it? You're a Negro."

That had seemed to end it in Sam's mind, but not in Jim's.

"Well," Jim had spoken very slowly and thoughtfully, "if I ran for student council–"

Sam had hooted wildly at that. "Man, you're out of your mind! You've got to be out of your mind. What makes you think that you can do anything to change this school? You can't make student council. You're never going to make student council. You're a Negro, man. You ain't got a chance. They'd never vote for you."

"How do you know that the students wouldn't vote for a Negro? No Negro has run for office."

"Man, no Negro has run for office, because no Negro is dumb enough to make a fool of himself. No one is that dumb."

Jim hadn't said anything back to that, but he had thought about it all yesterday.

Now, walking to the nominations assembly, he thought back over his past two years at Weston High. Not in all that time, not in four semesters, had he seen one Negro serve on the student council. For a long time he had blamed it on everyone else, especially on the white kids. They don't want Negroes, he had thought. Even though there were lots of white kids who not only liked him, but also were truly his friends, he had kept thinking that they didn't want Negroes on the council.

But now . . . now he could see another side to the picture. Sam and the rest of the gang were afraid to run for office. They were afraid they'd lose because they were Negroes. But someone has to try sometime, he thought. If no one does, then when will it start? People will never go forward. Someone has to risk it.

Running up the steps to the auditorium, Jim was so caught up in his thoughts that he bumped into Danny. Danny was one of the white kids whom Jim always thought of as a friend.

"You off in outer space?" Danny grinned at him. Jim knew Danny would help.

"Hey, Danny," Jim said. He felt scared, but he knew he had to try. "I've decided to run for student council, and I wanted to know if you'd nominate me today in the nominations assembly." He tried to look at ease.

Danny nodded. "Sure, Jim. You planning to be a big-time politician?"

They went into the assembly together. Jim kept his fists tightly closed, and when he saw Sam sitting with the gang in the corner of the auditorium they liked to think was theirs, he held his head a little higher and straighter. He tried to return Sam's mocking grin with a smile of self-assurance.

The president of the student body finished his explanation of the rights and duties of the members of the student council.

"We now come to the important part of this assembly," the president said, "nominations for the three empty student council seats. Are there any nominations?"

Jim looked around the room. He could see several hands raised. The president pointed to one person who stood up and said, "I nominate Tom Peters." Someone seconded the nomination, and from the front of the auditorium came Tom's voice, "I accept." Several more people raised their hands and nominated people. Then Danny raised his hand, and when the president called on him, he nominated Jim. From somewhere in the auditorium Jim heard a voice seconding the nomination. He looked at the president waiting for the signal. He nervously ran his tongue over his lips, and wiped the palms of his hands on his trousers.

"Do you accept the nomination, Jim Carlson?"

Jim stood up. He was conscious of hundreds of eyes upon him. For a brief moment he thought he couldn't speak, but from somewhere deep within him he heard his voice ring out louder than he thought possible, "I accept."

It was over. That part was over. And it wasn't as bad as he thought it would be. Now he had the worst part to look forward to–facing Sam and the gang.

Jim sat in his next class, not hearing anything the teacher was saying. He kept hearing Danny's voice over and over in his mind, "I nominate Jim Carlson." This was the first step. He was on his way up. He would show the rest of the guys that a Negro did have a chance in this country to do something for it. But he knew that in order to prove it to them, he had to win the election. And could he? He would have to make a speech in front of the next assembly. He remembered all the times he had stood up in front of his English classes giving oral biography reports. He had always been nervous and his voice had trembled. He always had felt that he had nothing interesting or important to say. But he did have something important to say now, and somehow he had to find the courage to stand in front of the entire student body and tell them how he felt.

That afternoon at lunch his friends were waiting for him in their corner of the cafeteria. Sam had a smirk on his face. Some of the others were laughing openly.

"Well, here comes the biggest nut in the world, the guy who thinks he can make student council."

Jim quietly smiled. How he wished they'd let up on him.

"You really must be cr-crazy!" Sam hooted. "Are you serious about this?"

"I'm going to try as hard as I can. Whether or not I win, I'll know, at least, that I wasn't chicken. I wasn't afraid I'd lose. I'll always know one thing–I tried. I did my best."

Sam sniffed. "Try! Why, man, when you get up in front of the assembly no amount of trying is going to help you. They're just going to see you're a Negro. Man, why don't you quit now while you're ahead?"

Jim smiled sadly. "I think if I'm honest and sincere," he said, "they won't see the color of my skin. They'll just see me." He hoped he was right.

The two weeks before elections went slowly. Jim stayed home every night and worked on his speech. He'd think he'd have it just right, and then he'd read it aloud. Every time he heard his speech echoing in his ears it sounded false and phoney to him. Then he'd tear it up and start over again. He had to sound like himself. He didn't want to plead for their votes. That would be the same as losing. He didn't want any special favors. He wanted to win because he was Jim. Jim could be white, black, purple, or green, but he was still Jim.

The night before the election he couldn't sleep. When he did fall asleep, he dreamed he was speaking on television. He woke up tired and nervous.

The morning at school dragged. He tried paying attention to his teachers, but he couldn't. He kept seeing his dream from the night before. Finally, the assembly period arrived.

Backstage, six chairs for the candidates were lined up in a row behind the lowered curtain. The candidates were walking up and down the stage, reading their speeches over and over to themselves. They shook hands and wished each other luck.

After what seemed like a long while, Jim heard the president announce that he would present the candidates. The six scrambled for their seats, the curtain rose, and they were facing the large auditorium.

Jim looked over the auditorium. All he could see was a blur of faces. He knew where the gang would be sitting. How can I talk to them? he thought. Will they all keep quiet and listen to me?

The first speaker rose and gave his speech. Jim didn't hear anything he said. He kept thinking of his own speech and praying that he wouldn't stumble or stutter or make a fool of himself. Then suddenly, he heard himself being introduced.

He stood up, walked slowly to the speaker's stand, laid his speech on it, gripped the sides of the stand tightly, and looked over the audience.

Jim gave his speech. He told the students why he decided to run for office. He told them why some people thought he couldn't make it. He told them what he wanted to do to make the school better, and how hard he would work to represent the whole student body. Then he told them to vote for the best man, no matter what his color.

He looked earnestly at the students for a moment. Then he sat down. His face was burning, his legs trembled. He heard applause, but he couldn't tell if he got more or less than the other candidates.

That afternoon, elections were held in fifth period class. After marking his ballot, Jim felt a letdown. In two days the results would be announced. Maybe he shouldn't have tried after all. Maybe Sam and the others were right. Maybe a Negro didn't have a chance and he was just making a fool of himself. He began to regret having run. He could hear Sam's laughter echoing in his ears.

The day of the assembly to announce the winners and swear them into office came very fast. When he woke up in the morning, he knew that, win or lose, he had done the right thing to keep his self-respect.

At assembly time Jim sat in the corner of the auditorium with the rest of the gang. No one kidded Jim today. Everyone was tensed. It was as if the whole gang expected Jim to lose, and they were steeling themselves against the hurt they would all feel.

The outgoing president of the student body announced the newly elected officers, starting with the lower grades. Jim and his friends had never been quieter in an assembly.

Finally Jim's time came. The president's words seemed to come so slowly–like cold honey from a spoon. "The . . . next . . . office holder . . . is . . . Jim Carlson."

For a moment not a sound came from the audience. Jim felt fear. Would there be boos? How many would turn against him? Then cheers and approving whistles came from all over the auditorium.

Jim bumped his way toward the central aisle.

"You made it, ole kid!"

"Never thought you could do it."

"Atta boy, Jim!"

Even Sam shouted approval and pounded Jim's back.

Jim sprinted for the stage amid the cheers. He took the steps three at a time, shook hands with the president, and turned to the audience.

Jim looked out at smiling faces and clapping hands. He had no idea so many cared. He felt suddenly that it had been worth all the doubts and the fears. It was like joining hands with all humanity.

FLIES

by LORENZ GRAHAM

Steve didn't like flies.

Steven Merrywood really hated flies. He would never eat food that a fly had touched, or food that he even thought a fly had lit on. His folks just knew he was like that. Nobody said anything about it anymore. When he was smaller, his mother used to explain to people who came to their house, and everybody would laugh at him. He just didn't care.

"Always was like that," his mother would say. "Ever since he was knee high, just a baby, he always hated flies. 'Natty old fly!' That's what he would say, real cute."

Now Steve was too big to be cute, but he still hated flies.

He had an idea that flies were like the devil himself, or like dying. Sometimes when he saw flies crawling around a dead animal, a dog or a cat that had died, or sometimes a dead rat, Steve would get sick to the stomach. He would puke. Even after he didn't see it anymore, he would think back on it and he would gag.

Everything said in the science books about flies and germs Steve would remember. He would talk about these things at home. They always had fly spray in the house because Steve, when he went to the market for other things, would buy a can if they needed it at home. Mrs. Merrywood fussed about it, but she knew it didn't do any good. She fussed about Steve wasting the stuff too.

"You got no cause to be spraying the stuff all outdoors," she said. "You kill some around the trash and garbage, but soon's you turn your back there's more of them coming. It's not worthwhile to waste the stuff."

Steve tried to explain that fly spray was poison, and it left some poison that got on the feet of the flies and killed them if they came back and walked around in it.

Steve had never understood his father much. When Steve was little, he thought his father was just like anybody else's old man, or daddy, or pa, or whatever they called him, but when he was in fifth grade, Steve could see that his father was hard on him and Junior, who was two years older than Steve. Sometimes Steve and Junior talked about running away. Junior always said that he would run away but that Steve shouldn't. Neither of them ran away. They knew that Mr. Merrywood didn't work regularly. Most of the time he was laid off. When he was laid off, he would be real mean, fussing a lot when he stayed at home, and going off a lot saying he was looking for work. He would stay away for days at a time. And when he would come back, he would never bring any money, but he would say he had been looking for work. Mrs. Merrywood went out to do day work. When it was like that, Junior or Steve had to look out for the younger girls, Mabel and later Cutie Pie.

"Look like if the old man can't find work," Steve said, "least he could do would be stay here and take care of the little folks."

"That ain't no work for a man," Junior said. "He got to get something to do like a man's work."

"Then it ain't work for a boy either," Steve said. Junior just said that Steve didn't understand, but Steve was not satisfied. He kept fussing about it. And one morning when Mabel had the measles and he had to stay home from school and take care of her while his mother went out, Steve said to his mother what he had been saying to Junior.

"Look like if Pa can't find work, least he could do would be to stay here and look after the little folks."

"It's not right for you to speak ill of your father," Mrs. Merrywood said. "He doing the best he can. And when he do find work, he brings his money all home to help feed and take care of his family. You got no right to speak ill of your father."

Steve held his tongue. He didn't speak ill of his father anymore. But after that, he started noticing things about his father that maybe he hadn't seen before. One thing, Mr. Merrywood didn't mind flies. He fussed about the cost of fly spray and said they were wasting money on that stuff. Steve tried to tell him, just tell him how important it was to get rid of flies. Mr. Merrywood got angry.

"Don't talk back to me, boy," he said, talking real loud. "I been living with flies all my life. They don't kill nobody. They don't even bite. All you got to do is just brush them away. That's all you got to do. You ain't got to spend no money trying to kill them all."

More and more, Mr. Merrywood was away looking for work, and by the time Steve was in high school he, Mr. Merrywood, was going down home to the farms to work and staying for months at a time. He would send money when he had it, and when he did send money Mrs. Merrywood always talked about it for a long time afterward. She still had to go to work every day almost. Steve was fifteen years old when the telegram came saying that Mathew Merrywood was dead. It was over a thousand miles to Oak Grove, where Mr. Merrywood had died. Mrs. Merrywood had a five-hundred-dollar insurance policy but it had lapsed. The insurance man said that he could pay just about ninety dollars on the policy.

"But we got to go," Mrs. Merrywood said. "Me and the children, we got to go to their daddy." Folks brought food to the house, and they brought some money.

"We got to go, somehow," Mrs. Merrywood told everybody who came. Steve saw the men getting together. Some of them were friends of his father. Some of them had cars, and Steve believed or figured that they were getting together.

It was Mr. Jackson who came to Mrs. Merrywood and said he would drive the family down, but his car wasn't in good condition and Mr. Moseley had a big Buick that they could use.

They left the next morning. Steve had to kind of hold himself to keep from feeling good about taking a trip because his father was dead. It was like a picnic. They took some of the food the neighbors had brought to the house. There was lots of fried chicken, some sliced ham, potato salad, a cake, and pies. There was so much that in the two days and a night they were traveling, everyone got tired of the cold food. Before they got to Oak Grove, they were stopping to get hamburgers along the way. It was in March but it was warm, especially as they got farther down south.

"They call it Oak Grove," Junior said, "but really it's way out in the country."

"That's what I say," Mr. Jackson spoke up. "That's what I always say. We all ought to be in the country. We'd be lots better off. These folks down in the country, they have a good life. In the city we got it hard."

"Mr. Jackson, you thinking about moving your family back down there?" Junior asked.

"Well it ain't only me, son," Mr. Jackson said. "See I got Mrs. Jackson to deal with and the young folks. I guess they just don't want to go back to the country." Steve didn't say anything. He was thinking about his father who, it looked like, did go back to the country. Now he was dead. Maybe he had been happy in the country. He certainly wasn't happy in the city. He would have been happy, Steve was thinking, if he could have been working regular.

At Oak Grove they found themselves really in the country. The houses were small, shabby, and run-down. Most of the folks they saw were working on shares. Many of them had the name Merrywood. Then there were lots more named Jackson and Woods and some other names, but there were more Merrywoods than anything else, it looked like.

Steve could never forget the funeral. He thought about it so much that it seemed he had always known about it. The Oak Grove Baptist Church was a wooden building that looked like a good rainstorm would wash away. It looked like that, but even Steve could tell it had been there for many, many years. It had once been painted white. Now it was streaked gray. Inside, the seats were homemade benches. The preacher was a plain country man who was poorly dressed, although he probably had on the best clothes he owned.

The body of Mathew Merrywood was already lying there in front of the pulpit when Steven and the rest of the family went in. It was in a coffin that was homemade. It was plain wood and blacked with what looked like shoe blacking. Mr. Merrywood did have on a clean white shirt and a nice necktie. His clothes were better than those of anybody else who was there.

Steve sat next to his brother Junior. His mother held little Cutie Pie in her lap. Cutie Pie was less than a year old. Uncle Charlie Merrywood sat next to Mrs. Merrywood. People were singing a very mournful song. Steve could not get the words, but the tone rose and fell as though people were crying. When everybody was seated, the preacher started talking and the music sort of faded away. The preacher read from the Bible, and they sang some more, and the preacher starting out soft just talking and then getting worked up to a place where he was hollering and shouting about the troubles in this world and the joys of heaven.

Steven really agreed with what the man was saying. He believed in it, but he did not understand why the preacher had to get so loud about it.

It was early spring. It had been chilly, but it was kind of warm on this day. Steve found himself almost going to sleep. He was at the end of the bench and there was an arm rest. He let his head rest on his hand and his elbow rest on the arm of the bench. He was comfortable there. The ride had been long, and they had not had sleep. The preacher was praying now. The words came through in spots.

"These loved ones of our departed brother, go before them in this world along the rocky pathway. Smooth the way where it is rough, and bear them up where they would fall, this mother with a little baby still at the breast . . . these sons on their way to manhood, going up the path of life, not knowing what troubles coming along before and beside and ahead of them, these youths facing all the torments of the city life, coming and going through the night with the bright lights and the loud noise, where the music blows out and the sounds are riding high, and the painted woman waits in the darkness like a leopard waiting for the lamb . . . and all the brothers and the sistren and the loved ones that the departed leaves behind to mourn his loss, give them strength . . . and now finally, finally, finally, Lord . . . when we turn back on the plow for the last time, when we fold up the cotton bag and can't use it no more, oh when they snatch away my sheet and they wrap me up in a shroud, oh when my tongue cleaves to the roof of my mouth and when they call my name but I can't hear it, oh when that nasty old fly buzz around my face I can't reach up to brush him away–that time, Lord, that time, Lord, that time, Lord, open up, open up."

Steve was wide awake.

He lifted his head and looked over at the face of his father. It was ashy gray now, set and looking hard as stone, but in the corner of the mouth a little drop of moisture. A fly, a big green bottle fly hovered slowly, circling over the still face, and then it settled on the cheek.

Steve moved forward swiftly. His hand brushed across the face of his father. The fly moved off.

No one seemed to notice. Steve sank down on the floor, sobbing. For the first time he cried for his father. He couldn't help it.

THE HORN AND ME

by KATHLEEN R. SMITH

Lots of times my dad said, "Life is a big *if*." I think he might be right.

That day at school my life hung on a big *if*. If I hadn't gone to the band room in school that day, things wouldn't be going for me now.

One day in class Miss Carter said to me, "Take this note to Mr. Lane in the band room, Dan."

When I got to the band room, Mr. Lane wasn't there. I waited for him. Maybe class would be over by the time he came. I looked around. I beat the drums for a while. Then I saw this horn. I picked it up.

I held it to my lips and started to blow. The way it felt, I knew this horn was meant for me. It was like all my life I had been looking for this horn.

When I was a little kid, everyone asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up. I didn't know. Other kids would say something. I knew a kid who wanted to be like Willie Mays. I knew another kid who wanted to have a Cadillac–no other car, only a Cadillac. All the time I knew him, that's all he wanted.

My big brother, Eddie, wanted to be a doctor. Even before he went to school, he wanted to be a doctor. He works hard in school, so I guess he'll be a doctor. Anyway he'll never give up till he is a doctor.

They used to say to me, "Work hard in school so you can get where you want to be."

I didn't know what I wanted to be. Some kids work hard anyway. I was the kind who had to know what he was going to be.

When I picked up that horn, I knew. You know, when I was a little kid playing with all the kids on the street, somebody would say, "Your mother's calling you." Right away I would know it was for me.

In class the teacher would say, "I'm going to call on someone to read." Maybe there would be forty kids in the room. I would get this feeling she would call on me. And it would be true. That's the way it was with that horn. When I saw it, I knew it was for me.

When Mr. Lane came into the room, I was still trying to play that horn. I didn't want to put it down.

"Have you ever played a trumpet before?" he asked.

"No," I said. "I never even held one before."

He looked at me.

"Let me show you," he said.

He showed me what to do. Then he played.

"That's not how it should sound," I said.

"Oh, it isn't?" he said. "Then you show me how."

Well, I tried. It was no good. I knew in my head how it should sound, but I wasn't making it sound that way.

Mr. Lane put on a record. A top man was playing a horn. He was making it sound right.

"Is that the way you want it to sound?" Mr. Lane asked. "That's the way I want to play it. I can't play it that way, but maybe I can teach you."

"Teach me," I said.

I worked all that year, and the next. I worked harder than I had ever worked. I stayed late at school. At home they asked, "Why are you so late?"

"I was at school working," I said.

"All right, where did you really go?"

Mr. Lane wrote them a note and told them what I was doing.

They said, "Just blowing on a horn isn't going to get you anywhere. What about your marks?"

My brother Eddie, who was going to be a doctor, said, "Let him alone. This is what he has to do."

Mr. Lane gave me an old horn so I could play at home, too.

I had to work harder in my classes because Mr. Lane said I could play in the band if I got good marks.

We had a good band. For two years I played in that band. Sometimes we would go in the school bus and play at other schools.

Once there was a big contest. Bands from all over were going to play. Mr. Lane worked us hard. He said, "You have all done your best. I have done my best. I think we will win next week."

It rained that day. All week it was sunny, but on that day it rained hard. Not many people were on the streets. We marched down the street playing. Bands from all over were there. Some were very, very good.

We were to play "When the Saints Go Marching In."

How we played that song. This time I was playing it just like I heard it in my head. It was *right*. Those people on the street really woke up. They tapped their feet and clapped their hands. Even the judges beat time. We were all one–the people, the band, the horn, and me. We were all walking the same way.

We won first place. Mr. Lane was happy. He said, "You are a great band!" To me, he said, "There's a man who wants to hear you."

The next day the man came. "I heard you play that horn with the band," he said. "Now let me hear you play it alone."

I played for him. When I stopped, he said to me, "What do *you* think?"

"I'm not as good as I am going to be. I need to learn a lot more."

"I can't teach him anymore," Mr. Lane said.

"He needs other teachers now," the man said.

"That takes money. Money is what I haven't got," I said.

"Money!" the man said, as if money were nothing. "Mr. Lane tells me you know how to work hard. I heard you play that horn. It's up to you. What do you want to do with your life?"

"This!" I said, holding up the horn.

Now I'm working harder than ever. I'm working hard in school, too. I have to know a lot of things before I get really good. More goes into that horn than just playing it.

Someday you'll put on a record, or turn on the radio. You'll hear me–and my horn.

NO HOP

by LORENZ GRAHAM

Manuel Gonzales always went to the hops. Manuel could dance. The girls said Manuel was a good dancer. He knew he could dance well, but he liked to play the drums at most dances. School didn't mean much to him, but the drums did. He would bring his drums, and he would drum along with the records. If he didn't play the bass drum with his foot and the snare drum with the sticks, he would play bongos or make with the hands on a table or anything, just so it sounded like drums.

They had a record hop at Van Buren High most Friday nights, but sometimes the vice-principal said "No hop" for punishment, if a crowd of students did something wrong or if one of the gangs was acting up. The VP called it discipline.

On Friday after Easter there was supposed to be a big hop, a dress-up dance with a real band—Johnny Hernandez and his combo. Manuel was going to have his first chance to play drums in a real live combo. The dance meant a lot to Manuel.

On the weekend before Easter, Manuel's older brother, Victor, came home on leave from the Navy. It was his first leave home. His folks had their house on East Street all decorated. They had a big sign out across the front of the door, saying "Welcome home, Victor." His folks didn't plan a party on Saturday, but all Victor's friends and all the older people, friends of the family, came around anyway. Lots of cars were coming up, and people were coming in to shake Victor's hand and slap him on the back. Manuel's father was passing out beer and wine to all the older people. A few of the boys got hold of some, too. Everybody was having a good time.

While the party was going strong, two cars full of new guys drove up. One of the cars was decorated real fine. It had mag rims and was painted a kind of candy-apple metal flake with white pin stripes. The other car was just an old Chevy street rod. Both drivers double-parked and kept racing their engines. Both cars had headers, and they were making a lot of noise.

Then, all these guys piled out at once and ran up the steps to the house. Manuel knew it was trouble. The new guys kept close together, and they just took over. They grabbed for drinks, and they started dancing with the girls.

Manuel's father was in the back of the house when they came in. Some of his men friends were back there too. He came out of the kitchen, and he started hollering, telling them to act like grown-ups. They just laughed.

"Who are these people?" he asked Victor. "Your friends?"

"Not my friends," Victor said. "I don't know these guys."

One of the guys was drinking out of a half gallon bottle of wine. He still had the bottle up to his mouth, when Manuel's father went for him. All the other men came out of the kitchen, too. They waded in and started knocking and hitting and shoving and putting the hoods out. One of the guys pulled a knife, but before he could use it, Manuel's father hit him full in the face. The guy went down, and his knife went flying off in the air. All the other new guys started running for their cars and cursing. The one Manuel's father hit was knocked out. The others took off, leaving him behind.

It broke up the party, which wasn't a real party anyway. The guy who was knocked out came to and said he didn't know the names of the others. He said they all lived way over on the west side and he had just moved over there. He said they just picked him up on the corner, and he went along for the ride. Nobody believed him, but they let him go.

The next night, Sunday, the same cars were back on East Street, but they only drove through, going fast and making a lot of noise. Manuel's father was real mad and wanted to go after them.

Everybody was afraid there would be trouble.

They said four cars came back on Tuesday night. At Van Buren on Wednesday, Manuel heard that the same four cars had stopped by the school. Some of the dance posters had been painted out.

Everybody at school thought that Mr. Van Dyke, the vice-principal, would call off the dance.

Manuel talked with Bill, who was the student-body president, and Mary, who was the girls' vice-president. He talked them into going to see Mr. Van Dyke.

They all went into the small office.

Mary started to talk. She said that everybody was ready for the dance, and they didn't think it was fair to call it off. Some of the girls had bought new dresses.

"Now let's all be very honest," Mr. Van Dyke said. "I promise you that I will be honest with you. Don't you really know why we should call off the dance?"

"They say it's because there was a fight way over on East Street last Saturday night," Bill said.

"Well now, maybe that was part of it," Mr. Van Dyke said. "The rest of it is that some outsiders, a large crowd of outsiders, people who don't go to Van Buren, people who don't even live in this part of town, are saying that they are going to break up your dance."

"But are we going to let them break up our dance even before it starts?" Manuel asked.

"Would you want us to go on with it," Mr. Van Dyke asked, "and have people get hurt here?"

"What about the police?" Mary asked. "Can't we get the police department to give us protection? Can't they arrest anybody who comes to make trouble? We wouldn't have a fight. We wouldn't have to have a fight. We wouldn't have to have anybody getting hurt. The police could arrest anybody who caused trouble."

Mr. Van Dyke leaned back in his chair and tapped on the desk with his fingers.

Manuel was worried. Mr. Van Dyke looked as if he had his mind made up. "Those outsiders aren't so tough," Manuel said. "We took care–"

"That's what I'm afraid of," Mr. Van Dyke broke in. "There are too many students at Van Buren ready for a fight."

Manuel knew that he had said the wrong thing. He wished he had shut up.

"But," Bill said, and he stood up to say it, "if we call off the dance this time, we may have to keep on calling off our dances and our games. We just won't have anything anymore if we let outsiders make us call off this dance."

"You have a point," Mr. Van Dyke said. "I'll tell you what. I'd like to talk to some other people before I make up my mind. You three come back at the end of the next period."

Not one of the three went to class that period. They weren't really ditching. They were having a committee meeting.

When the bell rang for the next period they were back at Mr. Van Dyke's office. The office was really crowded this time. A man they did not know was there. Mr. Van Dyke introduced him as Captain Williams of the police department. He wasn't wearing a uniform. Mr. Van Dyke asked Mary to tell the captain what she had told him earlier. Mary was scared but she spoke up. Then Bill spoke up. Captain Williams seemed to agree with both of them. Manuel kept quiet this time.

"Yes," Captain Williams said, "you are right. The police department is here to protect citizens."

"Then can we have our dance?" asked Manuel.

"Well, we will see," Mr. Van Dyke said. "The police may be able to handle the street, but what if some of the outsiders get inside?"

"We could have a very close door check and admit no one who does not have an ID card," Bill said.

"Then Victor, my brother who graduated from Van Buren last year, couldn't come," Manuel said.

"Oh, but he's in the Navy," Mr. Van Dyke said, "and I'm sure he has his ID card from the United States Navy. That would be all right."

"I'm glad you called us in on this before the dance," Captain Williams said. "It makes things easier for us when we are invited."

They all laughed.

Manuel could almost feel the sticks in his hands and his foot pounding the bass drum. There would be no trouble inside the gym. Manuel would see to that.

On Friday night, just before the band started to play, Manuel stood at the front door of the gym. He saw four cars, two of the same ones from Saturday night, roll up. Two policemen were already standing out in front. The drivers of the cars must have seen the policemen because they rolled on, without even a rumble of their pipes. Manuel went into the gym to adjust his drums.

Under the bright lights of the bandstand, Manuel's sticks flashed through the air. Working smoothly from background to solos with the combo, Manuel felt a kind of happiness he never knew before.

The dance was supposed to be over by ten o'clock, but Mr. Van Dyke let them play four extra numbers. Everybody said it was the best dance and the best band Van Buren ever had.

LAST RESORT

by RICHARD HILL WILKINSON

Coach Cranston bent forward and looked along the bench. His glance met that of Vic Naylor and the coach nodded. Naylor came along on his skates, tugging off his sweater and looking eager.

Coach Cranston said, "I have to put you in, Naylor. Get out there on the ice."

For just a second Vic hesitated. He was aware of the grin on the face of Bob Turner, who was seated next to the coach. He knew what the grin meant. Coach Cranston had said, "I *have* to put you in," instead of "I'm *going* to put you in." This left no doubt in Vic's mind and in the minds of those who had overheard the remark that Vic was being put in only as a last resort. Two other left wings had been sent to the showers with injuries. And now, out on the ice, Ben Martin was nursing a broken arm.

That left only Vic to play the wing position. He was indeed a last resort.

At first Vic was bitter. He glanced down at Coach Cranston. But the coach seemed to have forgotten him. He was studying the other players.

The team, Vic knew, meant everything to the coach. It was a machine made up of cogs and wheels and scraps of iron that were the players. Vic smiled to himself. You couldn't blame a man for accusing you of being a last resort when he thought of you as a scrap of iron.

Vic decided that, no matter what anyone thought, he was going to do his best to win.

The score was 2 to 1 in favor of the Badgers. There was less than five minutes to play. It looked as though Coach Cranston's Fleet Wings were due to take another licking. This would mean that the coach would lose his job for sure.

Ben Martin left the ice. Vic skated out to report to the referee. He glanced briefly up into the stands. There were at least 5,000 people watching. Most of them wanted the Fleet Wings to win. They were all watching Vic, the last resort.

Vic sighed deeply. He glanced back at the bench and saw the worried look on Coach Cranston's face. Another feeling of bitterness swept over him. Cranston was only thinking of himself, his future. He didn't care about the team. He didn't care how many of the players were injured. He only wanted them to win so he could keep his job. He wasn't even human.

Vic tried to put these thoughts out of his mind as he coasted into position for the face-off. After tonight, he thought, he'd quit the Fleet Wings for good. He wanted to work for a squad that had a human side to it.

The referee's whistle shrilled. Vic saw the black puck spiraling across the ice toward him. He dropped his stick. He felt the rubber whack up against it.

In another moment he was racing down the ice toward the Badgers' goal. Skillfully he evaded a Badger wing. He bore down on the left defense. Then, remembering the play, he passed deftly.

It was a blind shot, but, according to the plan, Lacey, the right wing, would snake the puck out from the clutter of skates and try for a goal.

Vic cut his speed, reversed, and brought up close to the sidelines. Lacey had the puck and preparèd to shoot.

A Badger defense man swept up and deflected the shot by a lucky thrust of his stick. It was unexpected. The rubber came slithering toward Vic again.

Vic came up on the points of his skates and spurted forward. He caught the puck, swung backwards and saw a clear path open to the Badger goal.

He shot coolly and deftly. No one was within reach. It was going to be a score!

At that moment Vic turned and ran smack into a speeding Badger player. Red lights danced before his eyes. For a moment the arena reeled. A curtain of blackness seemed to close over him.

He shook his head. There was a sharp pain in his left arm. A lot of people were shouting. Someone was holding him up. His head cleared and he laughed.

"Okay. I'm all right."

"Nice going, kid!" someone yelled in his ear.

A warm feeling came over Vic. He thought, "They're not all like Coach Cranston. The cogs and the wheels and the scraps of iron are people. They're human."

Vic glanced at the clock. Two and a half minutes to go! Well, there still might be time.

Something smacked against his stick, nearly tearing it from his hand. He looked down. The puck was there. The whistle must have blown. Well, he'd better do something.

A Badger man was swooping down on him. Vic tried the reverse play that was a trick of his own planning. He managed to get away, but only by a hair's breadth.

Other men were coming up. They were like specks before his eyes. He seemed to be standing still. Holy smokes! This would never do.

He tried the reverse again. His heart sank. Someone had taken the puck. Or had he passed it to Ryan? Nothing seemed clear. Ryan's face had been among the many who were near. He remembered trying to complete the play.

Everything swam before his eyes. He knew he was falling. He felt the impact as his body struck the ice. Then there was blackness. There were far away voices and a great deal of shouting. He saw faces swinging by, as if on parade. After awhile they stopped. Clearly he saw Coach Cranston grinning down at him.

"Listen, Naylor, I didn't know that what I said bothered you. I didn't mean it that way at all. I wouldn't have known except for Turner. After that first goal he said he guessed you were mad at me. That's what made you play like you did."

"*First* goal?" said Vic. "First?"

"Sure. There were two. Ryan made the second after he took your pass. It won the game for us. Say, how the devil could you stay out there with a broken arm?"

"Broken arm?" Vic stared blankly.

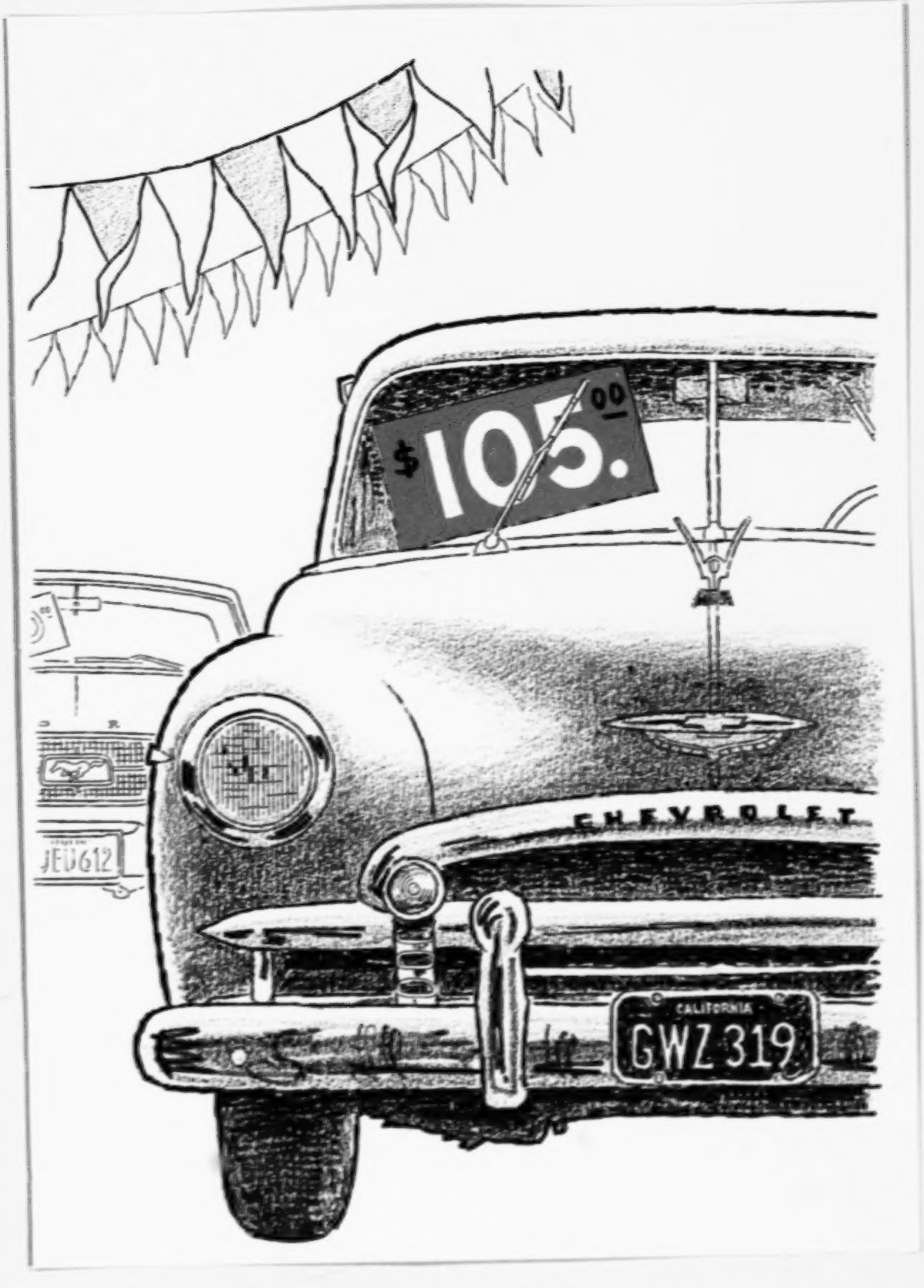
"Broken at the elbow. Same kind that made Ben Martin leave the ice. I didn't know it until you passed out. I never would have let you continue. It wouldn't be human."

Vic laughed. "Human?" he said. "Say, everything's all balled up. First I got to thinking I was a last resort and now you—"

Coach Cranston exploded. "Last resort! Listen, no one on my team's a last resort. They're all needed, all fit into the machine. Every cog and wheel is necessary. Every scrap of iron."

Vic closed his eyes and smiled. "I get it, Coach. Thanks. We're all needed. Well, I'm glad I had a chance to prove my worth. Yep, I guess I haven't any complaint."

SMILES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THE LIFESAVER

by JOHN DURHAM

"How much money you say you got?" the car saleman said. He looked at Arthur hard with his piggy little eyes. The car salesman was not big, but he was quite fat. He looked like a warped tub. His shirt was dirty around the collar.

"Don't tell him how much you got," Arthur's cousin said in Spanish. "It's none of his business."

"What'd he say?" the car salesman said.

"He said it's a nice car," Arthur said. Arthur himself did not think it was a nice car. He thought it was a disaster. Arthur's cousin, whose name was Mike, hit Arthur in the ribs with his elbow.

"Ouch," Arthur said.

"Tell him we'll give him fifty dollars," Mike said in Spanish.

"What'd he say?" the car salesman said.

"He said it's a nice car but it's just worth fifty dollars."

The salesman laughed like a madman. He laughed and snorted through his nose. He slapped himself on the knee and he slapped Mike on his shoulder.

"Ouch," Mike said, rubbing his shoulder. He spoke in Spanish.

"Tell him he is an insane pig, and the price is now forty-five dollars."

"What'd he say?" the salesman said.

"He says you have a nice sense of humor," Arthur said. "He says he thinks we don't want the car."

"Maybe we could come down to ninety-five," the salesman said. The sign on the windshield of the '51 Chevy said "$105." The Chevy was a sick green. One rear fender was dented. The tires were almost slick. Inside, the seat covers were torn here and there. The ashtray and lighter were missing. The car looked not only old but weary. It looked as if it might like to lie down and sleep forever.

But Arthur's cousin Mike wanted the car badly. Last night he bragged to Mary Nunez that he would pick her up in a car tonight. Mary had a new boyfriend from Alhambra with a shiny car. Why should she ride the bus? She asked Mike that. Now Mike wanted a car badly.

He wanted it so badly he didn't mind spending all seventy-five of Arthur's dollars. It was the seventy-five dollars that Arthur earned at the car wash. It took Arthur ten months to save the seventy-five dollars. Now his cousin Mike wanted to spend it on this disaster of a car.

"Tell him fifty-five," Mike said in Spanish.

"Fifty-five," Arthur said to the car salesman.

The car salesman shook his head sadly. "You boys don't want a car," he said. "You want to play games."

"Tell him sixty," Mike said.

"Sixty," Arthur said. Oh, it would be nice to have a car, he thought. But this car? Why didn't the salesman give him the key to try the engine?

"Sixty?" the salesman said. He took a cigar out of his shirt pocket and unwrapped it. He licked the bare cigar with his fat tongue. He began laughing while he struck a match on the sole of his shoe. He kept laughing madly, deep in his throat, while he touched the flame to the tip of the cigar. He laughed while he blew out the first blue smoke into Mike's face. He laughed louder and louder, slapping himself on the knee. Then he slapped Mike on the shoulder, very hard. "Eighty-five," he shouted.

Mike said something bad in Spanish. "Tell him," he said in Spanish, "if he hits me again I will smash his ugly head with a rock."

The car salesman's pig eyes rolled in his head. "What's he say?"

"Tell him," Mike said in Spanish, "that his mother eats hay." Mike rubbed his shoulder. "Tell him sixty-five is the limit."

"Sixty-five," Arthur said. "That's all the money we got."

"For boys like you, I might make it eighty," the salesman said. "But sixty-five." He shook his head sadly.

"Let's act like we're leaving," Mike said in Spanish. He took Arthur by the arm. They were almost out to Century Boulevard when the salesman shouted after them.

"Seventy-five," he yelled.

"Tell him seventy," Mike yelled at Arthur in Spanish.

"I don't want no car," Arthur yelled at Mike in Spanish.

"Seventy," Mike yelled in English at the salesman. "You shut up," he whispered in Spanish to Arthur.

The salesman was walking toward Mike. Mike was walking toward the salesman. Finally they stood almost face to face.

"Seventy-five," the salesman yelled.

"Seventy," Mike shouted.

"All right!" Mike yelled in Spanish at Arthur. "Tell him seventy-five."

"I don't want no car," Arthur yelled.

"A man needs a car," Mike yelled in Spanish.

"It's my money," Arthur said.

"Did I save your life last summer at the beach?" Mike shouted.

"Yes."

"Did I tell you it was my life I was risking?" Mike shouted.

"No," Arthur yelled back, "but that was last summer."

"What a cousin," Mike yelled. "What a friend! Will I give you half of what I get when my uncle dies?"

"No," Arthur yelled.

"One-fourth then," Mike yelled.

"I don't want a car," Arthur shouted.

"Sixty-five," the salesman yelled. "And that's final!"

"All right," Mike yelled in English. He shook the salesman's hand. The salesman laughed and slapped Mike on the shoulder. Mike laughed and slapped the salesman back, even harder. Arthur wished he could slap them both. Not on the shoulder.

"But his parents have to sign," the salesman said. "The law says that."

"Tell him your father's in Vietnam," Mike said in Spanish.

"My father's down in Anaheim," Arthur said.

"Your mother, then."

"My mother will never sign," Arthur said to Mike. "Let's forget it."

"Give me the papers," Mike said in Spanish.

"He says give him the papers," Arthur said to the salesman.

"I'll give you boys one hour," the salesman said. "Then I got to close up."

"It won't take any hour," Mike said in Spanish.

He led Arthur eight blocks up, to the El Fonda Bar and Billiard Parlor. They went at a dogtrot all the way. When they got to the swinging doors, Arthur was panting.

"You can't go in there," he said to Mike. "You're not twenty-one."

"Yeah, yeah," Mike said. "Come on." He dragged Arthur through the door.

Angie, the owner, a short, broad, powerful woman, stood behind the bar. She watched Mike and Arthur sit on stools at the bar.

"You can't come in here," she said.

"What else is new?" Mike said.

"What do you want?" Angie said. "I paid you for last week." Sometimes Mike cleaned up the place. When he needed money. "Go away," Angie said. "Don't call me. I'll call you."

"Ha, ha," Mike said. "You know what?" he said to Angie.

"What?"

"You're his mother," Mike said, pointing to Arthur. "Did you know that?"

"His father didn't tell me," Angie said calmly. "Now what's this all about?"

Mike told her what it was all about. He told her about Mary Nunez and Mary's new boyfriend from Alhambra. He told Angie how much he loved Mary Nunez. He said he would die if Mary left him for the new boyfriend.

Angie listened to all this with a hard face. But Angie was a soft touch for a story about love. Arthur knew that. Mike had told him. Any time Mike wanted something from Angie, he told her a sad story about love. Angie lost her husband twenty years ago, Mike said. Her first husband. She had also lost her second and third husbands. After she signed the papers, she called her fourth husband up from the kitchen.

"You know what?" Angie said to her fourth husband.

"What?"

"You're this kid's father." She pointed at Arthur.

The fourth husband looked thoughtful. He stared into Arthur's face. "He's a handsome boy," he said. "But, no, no. It couldn't be. I only came to this country five years ago. And he's at least sixteen."

"So that's that," the car salesman said. "Now you give me the seventy dollars and you get the pink slip.

Mike said something terrible in Spanish. Arthur was shocked at what Mike said. "This son of a sick sheep said sixty-five dollars," Mike shouted. "We need money for gas," he yelled. "Tell him to die."

"You said sixty-five dollars," Arthur said. "That was the last price you said."

"Was it?" the salesman said. "I thought seventy-five was the last."

"Sixty-five," Arthur said.

"Oh, all right," the salesman said. "I'll give you a break." He filled out the pink slip and gave it to Arthur. He also gave Arthur the keys. "You may have a little trouble getting her started," he said. "But she runs fine when you get her going."

Arthur and Mike walked out toward the car.

"Oh," the salesman said, "one more thing."

"What's that?" Arthur said.

"Your cousin," the salesman said, "tell him I speak Spanish. And tell him his language is something terrible."

"This is a car?" Mary Nunez said. She leaned on the front window next to Mike. Mike grinned at her. Mary looked great. She had on white capri pants and a tight blouse. She had leather sandals on her pale, thin feet. Her dark, shining hair was pulled back from her face. Her lipstick was pale pink. She looked great. Even Arthur thought so.

"I thought you were coming in a car," Mary said. "This is a heap of junk."

"It runs," Mike said. "It gets us where we're going."

"You better not want to go too far," Mary said.

"How about taking in a drive-in movie?" Mike said.

"Oh, I don't know," Mary said.

"Sure. Bring along your sister for Arthur."

"Don't do me no favors," Arthur said. Mary's sister was both very skinny and very mean. She bad-mouthed everybody.

"How about Faye?" Mike said to Arthur.

"Okay," Arthur said. Faye was a cute girl.

"My sister wouldn't go with him anyway," Mary said. "My sister has taste."

"Come on," Mike said. "Get in. You get in the back seat," he said to Arthur.

"Whose money paid for this car?" Arthur said.

"Who saved your life last summer?"

"I wish I had drowned," Arthur said. "I'll never hear the end of it." He slid over into the back seat.

"Come on," Mike said to Mary.

Mary opened the door and got into the front seat. She looked around the car, sniffing. "I don't know why I'm going in this pile of junk," she said.

"Because I'm handsome," Mike said.

"You think you're handsome," Mary said.

"And so do you."

"What movie?" Mary said. "And how do you know Faye will go?"

"Faye likes Arthur," Mike said. "Even though he's not as handsome as I am."

Faye was just listening to Beatle records, she said. And all right, she would go to a drive-in. She also looked great. Faye was blonde and slender and beautiful. She looked just great. She was also a nice girl. She got into the car and looked around. Then she smiled at Arthur. "Hey," she said, "it's a nice car your cousin got."

The car was a great success all the way to the drive-in. It was after the movie that the disaster happened.

The third feature was over, and the cartoon and the newsreel. "Well," Mike said sadly, "I guess we better go."

"Why hurry?" Mary Nunez said. "It's not dawn yet. My father will only kill me once."

"It was a good show," Faye said to Arthur.

Mike turned the key to start the car. "Uh, rur, uh, rur, uh, rur, uh, rur," the engine said. It sounded old and very tired. "Maybe the battery's low," Mike said. He turned on the starter again. "Uh, rur, uh, rur, uh, rur, uh, rur," the engine said.

Five minutes later, it said the same thing. And ten minutes. By that time a car far up ahead of them began to honk. Then another car honked. Soon cars were honking all over the drive-in.

"They don't like your wonderful car," Mary said. "I've never been so ashamed in my life."

"We need a push," Mike said.

"You need a new head," Mary said. "Buying a car like this."

"Who'll push us?" Arthur said. "You and your car."

"Your car," Mike said. "Your name is on the pink slip."

"So that's the way it is," Arthur said.

"It just happens I have money for a taxi," Mike said. "But only for two, I think."

"I'll kill you," Arthur said.

"I have to take my girl home, don't I?"

"What girl is your girl?" Mary said. "Not me. Let me see the taxi money. I don't believe you."

"Here," Mike said, showing her five dollars.

"Thanks," Mary said, taking it. "Faye and I will see you around sometime."

Mike and Arthur stood in the flickering darkness of the theater, alone. They watched the girls walking off toward the ticket booth. Faye didn't want to go. But Mary dragged her off. "Why stick around with those clowns?" she said loudly.

"You know how to pick girls," Arthur told Mike. "The same way you know how to pick cars."

"Twenty-five," the salesman said. His pig eyes shone. "That's the best I can do."

"Yesterday I paid you sixty-five dollars," Arthur said.

"Make it forty," Mike said.

"Hey, he talks English," the salesman said. "Big surprise."

"We'll go to the district attorney," Mike said.

"Tell him hello for me," the salesman said. "Oh, all right, I'll give you thirty, but only because I'm kind."

"Kind." Mike spat on the ground.

"Thirty-five," Arthur said.

"I'll give you thirty-five," the salesman said to Arthur, "if you'll do one thing."

"What's that?" Arthur said.

"Disown this cousin of yours," the salesman said.

"Ha, ha," Mike said. "Very funny."

Arthur counted his money while they walked down Century. "What are you doing tonight?" Mike asked.

"I have a date with Faye," Arthur said. "What are you doing?"

"Killing myself," Mike said. "Mary has a date with that swinger from Alhambra. With the car."

"There'll be other girls," Arthur said.

"Who'll need them?" Mike said. "I'll be dead." He looked terrible.

"Faye has a sister," Arthur said, "just as pretty as she is."

"What good is that?" Mike said. "That five for the cab was my last penny."

"Five is all you can have," Arthur said. "You already cost me forty."

"Ten," Mike said. "A man needs a little extra when he takes a girl out. And remember last summer."

"When you saved my life," Arthur said.

"Yes. Ten."

"Six," Arthur said.

"Nine."

"Seven."

"Eight," Mike said. "I can't go with less."

"All right," Arthur said. "But do me one favor."

"What's that?"

"Never save my life again."

FAINT HEARTS AND FAIR MAIDENS

by ROBERT J. FRANKLIN

When Fred Harris found the note in his hall locker after school on Monday, he didn't know what to make of it. Was someone playing a joke on him or was it a real threat? The letters and words had been cut from a newspaper and pasted onto a piece of notebook paper. It said, *IF YOU KNOW WHAT IS GOOD FOR YOU, STAY AWAY FROM LINDA PARIS.* There was no signature.

Fred didn't understand. How could he stay away from Linda Paris if he had never been around her? Heaven knew that he would give anything even to be near her. Ever since school started four weeks before and she had walked into his history class, he went around acting like some kind of a nut. Just the sight of her made his breath catch in his throat – she was so beautiful. He couldn't think of anything but her. He couldn't concentrate on his studies. He lost his appetite. When he slept, he dreamed about her. In all of his dreams he was rescuing her from something – a storm-tossed ocean, a thundering herd of cattle, a fall from a mountain cliff, a gang of roughnecks – and just as she was about to rush into his arms to thank him, he would wake up.

It was all very unfair. Why should he get a threatening note? What a mess! Fred thought. Someone I don't know wants to beat me up for talking to a girl I've never talked to. He felt a little better at the thought that he wouldn't be bothered, because he'd probably never get up the nerve to meet Linda Paris. But that thought also made him feel sad.

Fred's life really got mixed up the next day, Tuesday. He couldn't get the warning note out of his mind, and if he had known what was going to happen, he would have stayed home. He saw Linda walking along the upper hall. She was ahead of him and walking toward the center stairway. So, Fred dashed down the end stairs, raced through the lower hall, and ran up the center stairs just in time to meet Linda face to face as she started down. She looked straight into his face, smiled, and said, "Hello." Fred was so surprised that she passed by before he could say hello back to her.

Afraid that Linda would think him stuck-up, he ran along the upper hall, dodged students like an all-American, leaped down the end stairway three steps at a time, and raced back to the center stairway just as Linda reached the bottom step.

Linda's green eyes opened in wide surprise as Fred stood, out of breath, before her. Fred grinned, panted, "Hello," and continued on up. His heart beat wildly. Linda Paris had spoken to him at last, and he had spoken to her. Ah, life was wonderful!

Fred was late to his next class, which he finally remembered was on the first floor. It was the one class he had with Linda. She sat in the seat nearest the door. When he walked in, she smiled. He smiled back. The teacher did not smile. The teacher made a mark in his book and waited for Fred to get seated.

Fred was so excited that Linda had smiled at him again that he almost floated to his seat and didn't notice the foot sticking out in the aisle. He crumpled to the floor. "Oof!" he grunted. Everybody laughed. The teacher did not laugh; he made another mark in his book. Fred felt silly. He looked toward Linda. She was not laughing. Her eyes looked worried. His heart soared.

Thoughts of Linda filled Fred's mind. He couldn't think of anything else for the rest of the day. Then he found another unsigned note in his locker. As before, the words were made from newspaper letters – *YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED TO STAY AWAY FROM LINDA PARIS. THIS IS YOUR SECOND WARNING!!*

Fred looked all around but couldn't see anyone who looked suspicious. A tingle ran down his spine. Who could it be? A jealous boyfriend? That was it! But who? Fred was no coward. Well, he told himself, I'm not afraid of notes . . . but I'd be dumb not to be afraid of the guy who writes them. Linda was popular. She always talked with seniors and big-shot athletes. It was all unfair. He had just become brave enough to talk to Linda, and now some big lug of a note sender was going to shut him up. It made him mad. He'd take on anyone his size – but what was he supposed to do against a varsity football player?

Oh well, Fred thought, if I can't lick him, maybe I can outrun him. He could do the hundred-yard dash in ten seconds, but he suddenly remembered that there were a couple of football players who could do that, too – and with their uniforms on! The idea scared him.

In the cafeteria on Wednesday, Fred took a table across the aisle from Linda to study the faces of everyone who even looked at her. He saw that Linda talked with one boy more than with others. This boy was Pete Grimes, a six-foot three-inch football star in the twelfth grade. Was this his enemy? The more he thought about it, the more he was sure he had his man. Only someone afraid of being taken off the graduation list, or afraid of being kicked off a team would send unsigned notes.

Fred suddenly realized that Linda was looking at him.

"Wasn't that history assignment awful?" she said, turning away from Pete Grimes. Fred nodded nervously. "Did you get all the homework finished?" she asked further. Fred nodded again.

"Are you going to the Sports Night Dance Friday?" Linda asked.

Fred said, "Yes," and he looked toward Pete Grimes, who seemed to be glaring at him.

Three times that day Linda went out of her way to talk to him. Talking with her was like being in heaven, but the devil in the shape of Pete Grimes always seemed to be nearby.

Before he opened it, Fred knew there'd be another note in his locker. There was. *IF YOU KEEP TALKING TO LINDA PARIS, SOMETHING WILL HAPPEN TO YOU.*

As Fred walked home from school, he expected Pete Grimes to jump out from behind every tree and bush, but nothing happened. Then he remembered that Pete had football practice every day after school. He felt better.

The next day, Thursday, Linda spoke to him in their history class before the tardy bell. "Remember the Sports Night Dance in the gym tomorrow night," she said. When he looked surprised, she said, "Yesterday you *did* say you were going, didn't you?"

"Yeah, sure," he stammered.

"Will you dance with me?" she asked.

He completely forgot Pete Grimes when she turned on her smile. "Every dance, if you like," he said. And that afternoon the expected note was in the locker again: *NO MORE WARNINGS! THIS IS YOUR LAST!*

That night Fred looked so upset that his father asked what the trouble was.

"I keep getting threatening notes to stay away from a girl," Fred said. "I don't know whether to give her up or to meet her at the dance tomorrow night."

"Do you really like this girl?" his father asked.

"You can't guess how much," Fred said.

"Is she worth your getting beat up?"

Fred thought a moment and said, "Yes."

"Then go ahead," his father said. "There's an old saying that a faint heart never won a fair maiden."

"What does that mean?" Fred asked.

"It means," his father explained, "that only the brave deserve the fair. In other words, don't be chicken."

"Even when the other guy is twice as big as me?" Fred said.

Fred's father had no advice on that point. Fred knew he would have to decide for himself.

There was no note after school on Friday. Now Fred knew the guy meant business. He hadn't been able to keep his mind on his work all day long. Only Linda's smile kept him going. He almost told her about the notes but changed his mind. He was too proud to take his troubles to the girl he loved. He decided he would stand on his own two feet – until he got knocked off them.

When Fred got to the dance that night, Linda was already there. His heart fell. She was dancing with Pete Grimes, and worse, she seemed to be enjoying herself. He wondered if Pete had brought her, and by the time the number ended, he had made up his mind to go home and forget Linda Paris. But Linda saw him and came over – with Pete Grimes following.

"I'm glad you came," Linda said. "Are you going to ask me to dance?"

"What about him?" Fred asked, meaning Pete.

Linda laughed, "Oh, Pete is just being nice to me. You two know each other, don't you?"

"Hi," Fred said weakly. "I've seen you around."

Pete Grimes said nothing. He only stared at Fred a long moment and spoke to Linda. "Excuse me," he said, and he walked away to join two big fellows standing by the door.

While he and Linda were dancing, Fred saw Pete and his friends slip out the door. He began to sweat. What did they have in store for him? Pete, alone, was bad enough, but three of them! He stepped on Linda's toe.

"Ouch," Linda said, "you seem so nervous."

"I am," Fred said. Somehow saying it seemed to free him. Pete Grimes and his buddies faded from Fred's mind. The music was just right, easy and slow, like a hi-fi record to dream by. There was only the music and Linda in his arms. "I like you very much," he whispered.

"I thought you'd never say it," she whispered back. "But I knew it."

Fred's heart flipped at her words. Then the music stopped, and Pete Grimes entered his mind again. "It may not last," he said. "I've been warned to stay away from you."

"But you didn't stay away," she said.

"Didn't what?" he asked, surprised.

"You didn't stay away after all those notes," she said.

Fred was puzzled. "How did you know about the notes?" he asked.

Linda laughed.

"What's so funny?" Fred asked.

"You were funny," she said. "You looked at me all the time, but you never spoke to me. I didn't think you would ever speak to me, so I thought I would help you by sending those notes."

"*You* wrote them!" Fred said. He remembered how worried he had been.

Linda sensed his uneasiness.

"It was a silly trick," she said, "but I didn't mean to upset you."

"But the warnings, those threats to beat me up –"

Linda looked surprised. "Is that what you thought they were? Threats to beat you up?"

"What else could I think?" Fred asked.

"Oh, I *am* sorry," Linda said. "I thought if I warned you to stay away from me, it would make you talk to me. People always seem to want to do what they are told not to do."

"Boy, it almost backfired," Fred said. "I thought the notes were from Pete Grimes because he acts as if you are *his* girl."

Linda laughed again. "Pete Grimes is my cousin," she said. "He always looks after me like a big brother. When he left me with you, it showed he approved of you."

Fred sighed with relief. Then he asked, "But what did those last notes mean–'Something will happen' and 'no more warnings'?"

"Well," Linda said, "something has happened, hasn't it?"

"It sure has," Fred said.

"And you don't need any more warnings, do you?"

Fred didn't answer. Slow music started again. Pete Grimes and his buddies faded from Fred's mind forever.

Linda and Fred put their arms around each other's necks and danced slowly in one spot, as if they were circling in a dream.

WHAT IS NEXT?

by KATHLEEN R. SMITH

After the last two years, I can't help thinking, what is next? You see, till I was thirteen years old I was just like any kid. I went to school. I played a lot of baseball. I went swimming.

After thirteen I stopped being like any kid. I fell asleep all the time. I fell asleep sitting in school. I fell asleep at the supper table between bites.

This went on till I was about fifteen. At home everybody said, "Sam's growing fast."

In school they didn't like it. They kept having little talks with me – like what time did I go to bed at night? What did I eat? What was on my mind?

Then they started at home. Dad said, "How are you going to learn? How are you going to hold down a job?"

My brother said, "All the kids make fun of me, having a brother who sleeps all the time."

Mom said, "He'll grow out of it. My brother, Bob, was the same way."

Dad said, "Your brother Bob still is."

So that didn't help. Then they took me to doctors. They all gave me tests. They couldn't find out anything. They gave me pills.

They didn't help. One doctor said to take cold baths when I felt sleepy. I got sick of taking cold baths at home. With one bathroom, everybody got sick of it, too.

At school I couldn't take cold baths. I joined the swimming team. The water in our pool was cold. I liked the swimming team, but they said I was too slow.

I started going to school dances. They played records, and everybody danced. Sometimes I asked a girl to dance. Sometimes I slept. I took a girl named Lou to one dance. She was pretty, and a good dancer. She wanted to dance every dance. All that dancing made me tired. I sat down to rest and fell asleep. When I woke up the dance was over. It was time to go home. Lou had gone home. She had pinned a big paper on me. It said, "Bury it!"

So I stopped going to dances. Everybody gave up trying to help me.

Mom said, "We must be glad he is well."

Dad said, "What good does being well do him?"

Maybe I was going to be like Uncle Bob. I didn't like it, but what could I do?

Then I started to dream. Every time I went to sleep I dreamed. Every time the dream was the same. This big, ugly face was coming after me. If I tried to get away, it came faster. It never got me, for when it got close I woke up yelling.

One day we had a swimming meet, our school against another school. They were good. One of our men got hurt. The coach said, "Sam, we'll have to use you. I hate to do it, but we haven't got anybody else."

I waited for the race to start. I was watching the diving when I fell asleep.

I had that dream. The face was coming after me. Someone yelled at me. It was the coach. I jumped into the pool, half asleep.

I started to swim. I looked behind me, and there was this big, ugly face. It was bad seeing it in a dream, but it was worse seeing it when I was awake. I swam faster. I got to the end of the pool. So did the face.

By this time I could see that the face had arms and legs. I could see I had to swim faster to get away from it. It looked at me with a big grin.

From one end of the pool to the other I swam. I swam faster and faster. I was getting tired, but when I wanted to stop, I looked around and saw that face. It wasn't grinning anymore. It looked mean.

I don't know how many times I swam across the pool.

On the sides of the pool, people were yelling and jumping up and down. When I got to the end, hands reached down and pulled me out. People called out, "We won, we won!"

"You did it, Sam."

"You beat their best swimmer."

"How did you do it, Sam?"

I couldn't say anything. It was hard trying to breathe. I couldn't stand up, and some guys held me. Then the face came over. I could see it was a guy from the other team. He shook my hand.

"Good work," he said, and went away.

I never told anybody I swam so fast to get away from that face. I never told anybody about the face in my dreams. There are some things it is better not to tell.

Now they all think I am great. Now I have stopped sleeping. Oh, I still sleep at night, but not in the day. Even if I want to, I can't sleep days. I guess that part of my life is over.

I think a lot about it. Why did I sleep all the time? Why did I dream about the face? Why was the face in my dreams a real guy? Why do I stay awake now?

It just makes me think, what is next?

UNDER THE LIZARD

by JOHN DURHAM

I never been to the museum. Not till that cat Eddie took me. You know, that Eddie with the Ivy League clothes and the book in his hand? Sure, that one.

You ain't gonna believe what happen to me in that museum. Sure, I saw lizards a hundred million years old. That's what Eddie say, anyway. And sure, I saw that whale longer than a bad dream. But that ain't what I mean. Not exactly.

This Eddie, he been hangin' around, girl. You know what I mean? At school. I seen him, sure. But he ain't with the scene. He ain't tight with nobody, Eddie ain't. He cool, though. Yeah. He just around school, in them Ivy League clothes. With that book. Or this book. He always, anyway, got a book. And you know, girl, he look *good.*

Me, I just broke up with old stupid Charley, and I feelin' bad. I told old stupid Charley to take off. Sure, I did. But, you know. I feelin' bad.

You know how it is. You break up with a cat, you think you never get another one. You *know* you gonna get another one. But you think you won't. You know what I mean?

So along comes Eddie one day, in the hall at school. He come up to me in the hall, talkin' ofay.

"How would you like to go over to the County Museum?" he say.

"What?" I say.

"The County Museum," he say. "How would you like to go over there this afternoon?"

"The museum?" I say. "What you mean, boy?"

"You know," he say. "Where they have all the animals, and that."

"I *seen* the museum," I say. "But what I don't know, I don't know what you want. You sellin' tickets?"

"Oh, no, no," he say, Mister Charley to the teeth. "No, I want to take you there."

"They ain't got no use for me," I say. "I won't fit in them cases."

He laugh. "Aw, come on," he say. "It'll be fun."

"You mean like a date?" I say.

"Something like that," he say.

I just look at him. I never heard of such a thing. If a cat take out a girl, he take her out at night. To like a movie, or dancin', but at night. And not to no museum. You know what I mean? "You quit kiddin' me," I say. "I ain't all that square."

"Square?" he say.

"Sure, you puttin' me on," I say. Then I look at him. "Ain't you puttin' me on?"

He shake his head. "No," he say, "I thought you might like to go over there with me. After school."

"Man," I say, "museums, they ain't my bag. You know?"

"Oh, sure," he say. "But they *my* bag. I show you around."

For sure, girl, I don't know why I went. Like I say, old stupid Charley, he was gone. And they wasn't no one else. And this Eddie, he *look* cool.

Let me tell you, girl. That museum, it a big old place. I mean it *big*. I ain't walk so far since old stupid Charley left me down at the beach. Sure. That the reason I told him to take off. He say I talk too much. Yak-yak-yak, he say. And he go off and leave me at Malibu. With not one red cent.

Anyway, this museum, it big. We walk and we walk and we walk. We see these stuffed animals. They behind glass, and they suppose to look alive. You know? They lookin' out at you. Or they eatin' grass or meat or somethin'. But they stuffed. And they *look* stuffed.

"You like the animals?" Eddie, he say to me.

"I like them moths," I say.

"What moths?"

"The ones eatin' on the animals," I say. "Boy, this is a run-down old place. Everythin's old, man."

"I'll admit the place is a little run-down," he say.

"Me, I'm here 'cause you kind of talk me into it," [illegible] you, how come you here? You like this place?"

"Sure," he say. "I like the life sciences."

"The what?"

"You know. Study of plants and animals. I like all that. I especially like paleontology."

"Sure," I say, "whatever that is."

"A study of fossils. Bones left from past ages. You know. Like those two dinosaurs we saw coming in."

"You like that?" I say. "Lookin' at bones?"

"The right bones," he say. "Come on. Let me show you something."

He take my hand. It the first time he touch me. He take my hand, and he lead me into this big, empty hall.

"There," he say. "Look at that."

"Look at what?" I say.

"Up there, on the ceiling."

"Oh," I say.

"That's something, isn't it?"

"Yeah," I say.

And it was. Up there on the ceilin' there's two skeletons. And I tell you they are *big*. You think big, but I mean *big*.

"Wow," I say.

"The bigger one," old Eddie say, "that's a whale."

"I didn't know no fish ever got that size," I say. "Man."

"A whale is not a fish," Eddie say. Like I insulted his mother or somethin'. "A whale is a mammal. Like you and me."

"Like you maybe," I say. "But not like me."

"And the other one," Eddie say. "That's a plesiosaur."

"You puttin' me on again," I say.

"You know how old those bones are?" he say.

I look at him. "A thousand years," I say.

He laugh. "One hundred and fifty million years," he say.

"Ain't nothin' that old," I say. " 'Cept maybe the payments on the TV."

He laugh. "You think about that," he say. "Those bones up there are one hundred and fifty million years old."

I look up there at them bones. And I don't know why, but I *do* think about it. All them *years*. Stretchin' back and back and back and back. Stretchin' back forever. One year. Fifty years. A thousand years. A million years. I couldn't even think about a million years.

I couldn't, but I do. I think about them bones layin' in the dirt. This cat, this big lizard, it die, see? That's how Eddie talk about it. This lizard die. And he sink down into the mud. And his bones, they turn to rock, like. And they lay there. Five years. Five hundred years. A thousand years. A million years. And one hundred and forty-nine million years more.

"What you thinking about?" Eddie, he say.

"Man, I feel little," I say. "I feel like an ant, or somethin'."

"Sure," he say. "I know what you mean. But you don't look like an ant."

I look at him. He smilin' down at me. He lookin' *good.* And they ain't no one else in this big place. Not no one except Eddie and me and the whale and that lizard thing.

"You don't look like an ant at all," he say. And he kiss me. Right there under that lizard.

"Whoo, now," I say. I push him back. I wait long enough to find out can he kiss. Then I push him back and I say. "Whoo, now. You comin' on mighty strong."

"You don't mind all that much, do you?"

"I don't know," I say. "I got to think about that. I never been kissed before."

He laugh.

"Not under no lizard," I say. "Nor no whale, neither."

"You're a good-looking girl," he say. "I been watchin' you."

"I know," I say. "I been watchin' you watchin' me."

"And you ain't dumb," he say. "You just like to play dumb."

"Do I?" I say.

"Sure," he say. "That bunch of cats you tight with, that's their stick. To act dumb."

"But it ain't yours?"

"Me?" he say. "No. I like books. And I like ideas. Why should I play dumb? It might pay off in school. But that's the only place."

That kiss of old Eddie's. It wasn't no big production. But it was powerful. It was just now reachin' my toes. They was curlin' up, down there.

"How about you and me makin' a steady thin'?" he say.

"And go to museums all the time?" I say. "Uh-*uh*."

"Some of the time," he say. "Other times, movies and dancin' and like that."

"Try that one more time," I say.

"Try what?"

"Kissin' under the lizard," I say.

And so he did. One hundred and fifty million years. That's how long it lasted. My toes, they had a permanent wave. When he stop.

"Well?" he say. "What do you think?"

"Who's thinkin'?" I say. "But, yeah. We can try it for a while. You ain't a bad lookin' cat."

"Where you goin'?" he say. 'Cause I was walkin' to the door. "I didn't tell you about the whale," he say.

"I think the lizard just about enough for today," I say. "I don't think I'd better try the whale just yet."

And so that what happen to me at the County Museum. And the next time you see old stupid Charley, tell him somethin'. Tell him somethin' for me. Tell him he might try readin' a book. And the next time he see a lizard, tell him to salute.

PRIVATE REILLY AND THE MESS HALL MESS

by TED DONALDSON

As you may already know, a private's life in the army is not very private. Just how a private got the name must be some bad joke. Everybody in the army owns the private's life but the private: the corporals, the sergeants, the captains, and, of course, the general – all of them control the private's life, giving him jobs to do from morning till night.

Besides picking up stones, cigarette butts, feet, and cadences, the private gets lots of other fun things to do. The officers call these jobs details or duties, like mopping up the shower room or going on KP duty – which means kitchen police or working in the mess hall, the place where the soldiers eat. I don't know where that name *mess* came from, but I gave the army a good reason for calling it that.

I used to get that little duty too many times. In fact, I was on KP duty so often that my commanding officer almost sent me to cooks' and bakers' school. But the last time I was in the mess hall kitchen, I spoiled his plan to send me to a school for cooks and bakers. Who wants to learn to cook anyway? Besides, I might get to be a corporal.

Let me tell you about the that last time I was on KP.

The bugle blew at 5:00 a.m. The corporal in charge of quarters came in, dumped water on me, threw my clothes at me, and pushed me all the way to the mess hall so I would be on time. I was not really alive at that hour in the morning, but the first cook was glad to see me anyway.

"Well, if it ain't my right hand man, good old Reilly. Now let's see, how long has it been since we last saw you? Was it yesterday?"

"You remember. Where are the potatoes?" I asked, and yawned.

"Never mind the potatoes. I want you to help me mix this pancake batter. Go into the storeroom and get me the baking powder. Do you know where the storeroom is?"

With my eyes half-closed from lack of sleep, I was just able to get to the storeroom. I did not even have to turn on the light because I knew where everything was. I pulled down a can from its usual spot and walked back to the cook, yawning and trying to keep my eyes open. The cook dug into the can and dumped three big ladles of the fine white powder and stirred them into the thick batter. I put the lid back onto the large can and was about to start back to the storeroom when my one open eye saw the label on that can. It read, "Patching Plaster." I looked at the cook. He was happily stirring the three big ladles of plaster into the pancake batter. I stood there. But I knew I was in bad trouble. Really bad.

What if I got caught with the plaster? I put on great speed, for me, that is. I hid the can of stuff in a far corner of the storeroom. But my speed made the cooks and privates helping with breakfast look up and watch me. I smiled. My past record did not help. I tried to look innocent. I whistled a happy little song.

Everybody got tired of looking at me after a while. But I kept my eye on the batter. What would happen when that stuff hit the hot griddles?

The making of breakfast went on in the kitchen without any more trouble. Well, there was one little thing. The corporal in charge of cooking the bacon was a new cook. He couldn't have gone to cooks' school because he didn't understand plain English, at least, not the way we spoke English in the army.

I was helping this new cook put bacon in large flat pans. I tried to tell him that he didn't have to put anything over the bacon to keep it from burning in the ovens. But he didn't seem to understand. He must have thought I said "vinegar" because he began pouring gallons of the stuff over the bacon. He had a dumb look on his face as he poured the vinegar. My look of panic must have meant okay where he came from because, with a big smile, he put the whole mess into the ovens.

Things were now happening on the griddle front. All three griddles were covered with circles of hard batter. Not a bubble came up from them. They seemed to set like cement. The cook looked funny as he turned the pancakes, and they clattered. Finally, he had stacks of them ready for breakfast.

I could not watch those pancakes any longer. I got busy in the dining room; but like a criminal who must return, I went back to the kitchen to see how the pancakes were doing. The sergeant caught me, and I had to carry the awful things into the dining room.

Then I had to help the new cook pull the pans of bacon from the ovens. The bacon looked like old pieces of leather. I soon found out something very strange about that bacon – it could be pulled out to great lengths.

By now the tables were set and it was time to start eating breakfast. The mess sergeant blew his whistle. I knew this was it. The men came in, talking and laughing. I knew I couldn't do anything to stop what was coming, so I just stood back and waited. I might as well enjoy it.

I was most interested in the sergeant's table, so I got a spot where I could see the table but could get out fast – just in case I had to. The top sergeant, old Breadbasket Brown, had trouble right away when he tried to stick the fork into the pancakes. All he got was a bent and twisted fork. He must have been hungry, because he finally picked up the pancakes with his hands and put them on his plate. I watched as he poured syrup over them and tried to cut them with his knife. This see-saw fight between old Breadbasket and the pancakes made everybody in the mess hall stop and watch. In this fight of man against the pancake, the pancake would not give up – even a little. The sergeant gave up first and laid his bent fork and twisted knife on the table. He was mad, really mad at those pancakes.

Not too far away, another sergeant tried the bacon. He went at the bacon like a soldier going into combat. With his knife and fork he cut, pulled, sliced, jerked, yanked, and sawed. For a minute, it looked at though the sergeant might make it. But he let go too soon and the bacon snapped together, flew off the plate, sailed through the air, and slapped a waiter across the face.

Sergeants are taught never to give up, so he began again. But after some time it was easy to see the sergeant was not winning his face. I guess he felt he had let the enemy get away.

I saw a private really break one of the pancakes. He must have cut it along the grain. It was a small enough piece to chew, so he put it into his mouth and began to chew on it. Soon his eyes popped open. He got stiff. Then he turned as white as plaster. He slowly sank under the table.

Everybody began to reach for milk and coffee, the only safe things they found that morning. They left the mess hall in a big hurry for drill duty. I learned later that the cooks were sent to the Chemical Warfare Service and got some offers from outside companies for their new formulas.

Old Breadbasket Brown charged into the kitchen that morning and told me to leave – fast. In fact, he grabbed me by the seat of the pants and threw me out the door. I made a neat two-point landing in the middle of the company street. Sergeant Brown told the commanding officer that he did not understand just what went on in the kitchen, but getting rid of me would improve the food.

Well, the kitchen area is "off-limits" to me. When I do go into the mess hall, the cooks stand guard at the doorway to the kitchen with meat cleavers and knives, just in case. I don't think I'll ever get KP duty again.

CINDERELLA—THE TEEN-AGE BEAUTY QUEEN

by JANE SPRAGUE

Once upon a time, there was this chick who was really in a jam. I mean, she was short of bread and threads, and even her portable record player played more scratch than rock.

Cindy, whose real name was too square, lived in a big, lonely pad with two creepy stepsisters and a stepmother.

The creeps, who were right out of "Chiller," were going to modeling school. They wore out the mirrors trying to fix up their faces that were . . . like *gone*, man. Even a complete overhaul would never do what they needed.

The stepmother, a chick built like a jukebox, was hot to get her two babes into the movies. And she hated Cindy because she got everything from nature that the two creeps were trying to find at the modeling joint.

One day there was a swingin' beauty contest. The creeps hit the panic button. Poor ol' Cindy almost lost her cool before those two took off to try their luck. And, just to bug her some more, old Jukebox left her a sinkful of dirty dishes to do.

As soon as they left, this good-lookin' cat with the magic touch came by. He saw the Cindy chick all hung up on those sticky cups and saucers. He waved his little magic wand, and just like on TV, ZAP! the dishes were done.

Then this cat said to Cindy, "Let's ditch this scene, Baby. Let's go where the action is."

He did a little fancy footwork, said some magic words, and there was Cindy, looking cool and carefree in the latest style dancin' dress.

The magic cat gave her the glad-eye. With that his magic wand turned into a gold-knobbed cane to go with his shiny top hat.

He opened the door, and outside was a Cool-mobile, driver and all. The big eight was purring like a tiger in love with the road.

They got in, and he said to the cat who was driving, "Go, man, *GO!*"

They cruised in and out of all the scenes until finally, just before the hands of the clock were straight up, they got to the beauty contest.

The magic cat took Cindy in the back way. She slipped into the line of gorgeous dolls, and in no time at all, she had the winner's crown.

There was a big movie wheel watching the show. He took one look at Cindy, and his cool was gone forever.

"Say, Chick," he said to Cindy, "I know what I like, and you got it. Let me take you home to my solid-gold swimming pool. I dig your style, Baby."

Cindy looked up at him and melted. Like, could you blame her?

But the magic cat was sore. He saw her first, he figured.

So he said his magic words and . . . *ZAP!* The threads began to fade on poor Cindy, just as the clock hit the midnight hour.

She got the message. She cut out for the home pad like a moon rocket!

They colored the day dark blue for Cindy next morning. The creeps stepped on her toes every time they went by. The walkin' jukebox made her clean out all the closets. And the magic cat hid around, peeking into the closets, making Cindy drop things and spill things all day long.

But the big movie wheel was a smart cat. He had the men in blue trace the license number of the magic Cool-mobile. It was easy. Everybody knows you gotta have a license for everything – even magic.

All of a sudden, a knock come on the door. The jukebox opened it one careful crack.

"Mr. Solid Gold!" She slammed the door and took off to polish up her two tarnished little creeps.

Gold, the big movie wheel, knocked again. He didn't dig this waiting around.

Jukebox finally opened up and let him in. He hardly saw the two creeps. He was too busy looking for Cindy.

"Where's the beautiful chick I met last night?" He looked under the table, and everywhere.

When the magic cat heard the movie wheel's voice, the cat stuck his head out from his hiding place. He needed his little magic wand!

But, too bad, he left it in the Cool-mobile!

He jumped up and ran out the front door just in time to see the men in blue tow the Cool-mobile away for overtime parking.

Solid Gold heard a little noise. He opened the closet door and pulled Cindy out. The poor chick was all covered with dust and dirt.

"Here she is!" Solid Gold was beaming with a solid-gold smile.

"Oh, how did you find me?" Cindy asked, starting to melt again.

"It doesn't matter. I found you, Baby. Let's go and set the world on fire. I'm going to make you a teen-aged beauty queen," he said. Then he took the diamond winner's crown out of his pocket, unfolded it, and put it on top of her little head.

He waved his hand at the steaming mad creeps and their boiling mad mama and took the limp and completely *gone* Cindy home to his solid-gold world.

What more could a swingin' chick want, I ask you?

THE MESS-UP

by JOHN DURHAM

"You done *what?*" his grandmother said.

Cal thought he better not say anything. He just pointed at the couch. It sagged badly in the middle, where he'd been sitting.

His grandmother circled the couch to the right. She circled it to the left. He nose was stuck out like a bird dog's. Her head was trembling. She was shivering all over, like a dog about to flush out a covey of quail. She touched the couch with one finger. She drew the finger back.

"Your Uncle Melvin, he pure gonna die," she said. "Oh, Lord God," she said, "here he come."

Cal could hear Uncle Melvin's car in the driveway.

"What I gonna do?" he said.

"Well, you cain't hide, that's for *sure,*" his grandmother said. "How you gonna hide seven feet high of moose?"

"I ain't but six-ten," Cal said.

"Well, I just beg your pardon," his grandmother said. "I thought you was big."

Uncle Melvin was coming in through the back door. Cal could hear him sniffing along, the way he did. Step, step. Sniff, sniff. It was Uncle Melvin's sinus that made him sniff like that, his grandmother said. Here he came. Step, step, step. Sniff, sniff, sniff.

"Where's everybody?" Uncle Melvin called.

"In here," Cal's grandmother said. "In here in the livin' room."

Uncle Melvin came in, sniffing twice. He was about Grandma's height, about five-two, and kind of fat. He wore gold-rimmed glasses on his round, shiny face. Sniffing, he looked over at Grandma. Cal got his height from his father's side. "What's going on?" he said.

"He done it again," Grandma said.

"What?" Uncle Melvin said. "Done what again?"

"Oh, not the hi-fi," Grandma said. "That was yesterday. Today it's the couch."

Uncle Melvin stiffened. He stiffened like a hound that's just heard another hound baying off in the woods. He circled the couch to the left. He circled it to the right. He walked over and bent down to see where the middle of it touched the carpet. Then he stood up, shaking his head and sniffing.

"I won't ask," Uncle Melvin said.

"Don't," Grandma said.

"I was just sitttin' here," Cal said. "Just readin' my Batman book." He held up the comic book. "I was just sittin' there readin' and I got nervous-like."

"I didn't ask," Uncle Melvin said. "I made the mistake of asking about the hi-fi. The couch I don't want to know about."

"Well, see," Cal said. He had to tell him, didn't he? "Well, see, this book it got excitin'. Yeah. Batman he trapped in this factory place, like. See? And this bad guy, he set fire to –"

"Don't tell me any more," Uncle Melvin said. "I don't want to hear it.

"And I got to jigglin'," Cal said.

"He got to jiggling," Uncle Melvin said. "You hear that?"

"I did," Cal said. "And that couch –"

"Yeah, yeah," Uncle Melvin said. He heaved a big sigh. "Boy?" he said.

"Yeah?" Cal said.

"You know how much that couch cost me?"

"How much?"

"Four hundred and thirty-two dollars. Plus tax."

"My lordy lord," Cal said.

"You know how many drug orders I had to fill in that store to make that much money?"

Cal shook his head. "I didn't mean no harm," he said.

"You didn't mean any harm yesterday. You didn't mean to break the bass speakers on the hi-fi when you turned it up full blast. I know that. You didn't mean to make the neighbors call the police out here. I know that. You didn't mean to get scared and run through the back screen. I know that, too. I guess you didn't even mean to run through the flowerbed."

"No," Cal said. "I didn't mean none of that."

"How long you been here?" Uncle Melvin said.

"Let's see, now, Cal said. "About three days."

"So far you are costing me just about one hundred and fifty dollars a day," Uncle Melvin said. "And that don't include bus fare from Alabama. Business at the store better pick up some."

"I'll be better," Cal said. He wanted to stay. He liked Los Angeles. He liked Uncle Melvin's house. He even sort of liked Uncle Melvin, sniff and all.

"I gonna talk to him," Grandma said.

"I'd hate to send him back, when he just got here," Uncle Melvin said.

"I gonna tell him a thing or two," Grandma said.

Uncle Melvin shook his head, sniffing, and went back to his room to shower.

"Now, you looky here," Cal's grandmother said.

"Yes'm," Cal said, lowering his head. How could he do all them bad things? He *knew* he was bad.

"You gonna do it this way. You ain't gonna touch nothin'," Grandma said. "Not one thing you gonna touch."

"Cain't I set down?" Cal said.

"In the kitchen," Grandma said. "On one of them hard chairs. They only cost thirty dollars apiece. And you ain't gonna jiggle. Hear?"

"Sure. No jigglin'."

"Before you do *anything*, you come ask," Grandma said. "*Anything*."

"Yes'm. Can I go down to the school?"

"What for?"

"Fiddle around with my basketball."

"Lemme see," Grandma said. "Lemme think about that school ground. It's all paved, ain't it?"

"Sure," Cal said. "I can't break nothin' down there."

"Well, all right," Grandma said. "But you be careful crossin' the street."

"Yes'm."

"I wouldn't want you runnin' over no trucks."

Cal dribbed his old basketball all the way down to the school ground. He dribbled plain and he dribbled fancy. He rushed full speed down the sidewalk, around a lady with a baby carriage. He dribbled through his legs. He dribbled behind him with his left hand. He ran backwards, dribbling. He got to the wire fence around the playground. The gate was halfway down the block.

So Cal threw the ball over the fence, hard, so it would bounce high. Then he took a run and barrel-rolled over. He landed lightly and easily on his toes, caught the ball on the tips of his fingers, and dribbled back down the court.

He got under the other side's basket. (He was in a big game now. The other side was good, all right. But he'd show them.) He got under their basket. He whirled. He jumped. He drew the ball far back with his right hand and threw it high in the air, all the way down the court. It swished right through, the way it nearly always did.

"I saw it," the man said. "But I don't believe it." He was sitting on the bench over by the wall of the school building. The other man with him just watched.

"Believe what?" Cal said.

"That jump over the fence," the man said "That shot. How old are you?"

"Fifteen," Cal said. "Goin' on sixteen."

"Three inches to grow," the man said. He whistled. "Never seen you around here," he said.

"Jus' got in, three days ago," Cal said.

"You live around here?" the man said.

"Three blocks over," Cal said. "That white house with the big rock chimney. And that great big tree."

"That's Melvin Withers' house," the man said. "You any kin to him?"

"He my uncle," Cal said. "Now, if you just 'scuse me. I want to throw the ball around.

The next morning was Sunday. Cal finished up his three plates full of pancakes. He ate the two slices of ham and the six eggs. He finished off the orange juice, all three glasses. And he drank the quart of milk. Then he wandered into the living room. Uncle Melvin sat in one of the big chairs, reading the Sunday paper.

He looked up at Cal. "What you doing this morning?" he said.

"Not much," Cal said. "Thought I might go down to the school ground."

"You ever wash a car?"

"No, sir. But I can sure try."

"Hose is in the garage, hanging on the wall," Uncle Melvin said. "Shammy, too. Don't use soap. It takes off the finish."

The trouble was that the car was half-in and half-out of the garage. Cal washed the back part of it, all right. But he couldn't wash the front, not without getting water all over the lawn mower and the trimmer and the shiny electric saw.

He should have gone into the house and asked Uncle Melvin to move the car. He saw that later. He saw a lot of things later. But the keys were right there, in the lock. And Cal had never driven a car. His daddy didn't have one, down there in Haynesville. But he'd watched Uncle Melvin. And he'd watched other people, too.

You just turned the key and you moved that little lever on the steering wheel, and you pressed your foot on the gas.

Cal got into the car, hunched over like that, so he could see out. All he had to do was back it up six or eight feet. He could do that, couldn't he?

Let's see now, he thought. Key there, gear lever here, gas pedal down there. He didn't see the bee. Not till later. He turned the key and the bee hit him on the wrist. His foot went down on the gas pedal and his hand moved the lever. The engine was roaring, loud, and he was moving. He was moving past the lawn mower and the trimmer and the shiny electric saw. He was moving, with a crunch and a crash and a screech of metal and the crackle of breaking handlights, out through the back of the garage. He knew the door was the other way. But his foot was stuck down there on that pedal, and he couldn't find the brake with the other foot. He knew already that the car might as well be the bus back to Haynesville. Moving faster now, picking up speed, through the red and white petunias in the flower bed behind the garage, he knew already this was the last straw. He was sick. He watched the lawn sail past. He watched the car head toward the big tree, the elm. He knew it was going to hit, but he couldn't do a thing. The car hit the tree and stopped. It stopped moving, that is. But the engine went on roaring, loud.

The first he saw of Uncle Melvin was the arm coming through the window to turn the key. He could hear Uncle Melvin all right, even over the roar of the engine. Uncle Melvin was screaming. He was screaming like a cat with a mashed tail. He was screaming like a diesel train at a crossing. He was screaming and waving the arm that wasn't turning off the key.

Then, when the engine was turned off, Uncle Melvin was dancing. He was dancing all over the smooth lawn. He threw back his head, still howling, and danced with rage all over the smooth green lawn. Cal sat there in the car, his hands over his face. He watched Uncle Melvin through his fingers. Uncle Melvin was pretty active for a man his age. He went on dancing and howling for some time.

While Uncle Melvin danced, he shouted things. He shouted things about how fast Cal was going back to the woods. He shouted things that made Grandma cover her ears. Grandma was now standing on the back porch looking from Cal to Uncle Melvin. She was shouting, too.

"You hush that kinda talk," she shouted at Uncle Melvin. "You want the police down on us again? And you," she shouted at Cal, "get your big stupid self outta that car. You done about as much damage as you can do. You gonna drive *up* that tree? Is that what you gonna try? *Up* the tree?

Cal got out of the car, hunched over. He couldn't look at Uncle Melvin. He couldn't look at Grandma. He thought he might just as well go pack. He thought that because that was what Uncle Melvin was telling him to do. Uncle Melvin had stopped dancing. He was just shouting now. He was lying in one of the lawn chairs, sniffing and shouting.

That was when the man came around the garage into the back yard. It was the man Cal had seen yesterday at the school ground. He looked at Cal. He looked at Uncle Melvin. He spent a long time looking at the back of the garage and the front of the car.

"I guess I won't ask what happened," he said.

"Don't," Uncle Melvin said. He had stopped shouting. He just sat there in the lawn chair with his hand over his eyes. "How are you, Jackson," he said.

"Better than you," Jackson said. "I can see that."

"Yeah," Uncle Melvin said.

"I came over to talk to you about the boy," Jackson said.

"What'd he do?" Uncle Melvin said. "Knock down the school?"

"Well, no," Jackson said. "I think he could, but not yet."

"He's going back to Alabama," Uncle Melvin said. "Today. Let him tear up the South."

"That boy is the greatest natural athlete I ever saw," Jackson said. "You can't send him back."

"You watch me," Uncle Melvin said.

"He could win letters in four sports," Jackson said. "Maybe five or six. If he had time."

"That wouldn't put my car back together," Uncle Melvin said. "Or my garage. Or my flower beds. Or my screen door. Or the couch or the hi-fi."

"The pros will pick him up as soon as he's out of high school," Jackson said.

"The police, you mean?" Uncle Melvin said.

"I mean the Lakers," Jackson said. "A Laker scout watched this boy yesterday. He said he'd give him a contract right now."

"Is that right?" Uncle Melvin said. "Would he take him away?"

"Not right off," Jackson said. "The boy's still a little too young."

"How much they pay those fellows?" Uncle Melvin said.

"Five or six times what you make," Jackson said. "Enough in one year to buy a couple of houses like this one."

"He'll need it," Uncle Melvin said. "By the time he's old enough he'll go through two or three houses."

"You gonna let him stay?" Grandma said.

"Sure," Uncle Melvin said. "What would I do for excitement if he left?"

"I'll be good, Uncle Melvin," Cal said. "I promised you that."

"You listen here, boy," Uncle Melvin said. "You been trying to be good since you've been here, haven't you?"

"I surely have, Uncle Melvin."

"Well, you can see how that approach works," Uncle Melvin said. "Let's try something new."

"What's that?"

"Try to be bad," Uncle Melvin said. "You're such a mess-up that the results just have to be good."

THE FIXER

by JANE SPRAGUE

You might as well know right away that around my place I'm known as The Fixer. That's because ever since I could hold a screwdriver, I've been fixing things. Kids have been bringing me busted wagons and doll buggies, broken bikes, and bent Pogo sticks for as long as I can remember.

The *only* person who won't let me fix things for her is my one and only mother! How do you like that? You can see how I feel when there's a plumbing truck or a TV repairman's truck parked outside my house. I feel downright insulted – that's how I feel.

But ever since one day last summer, she won't even tell me when something is broken. That's right – she keeps it a dark secret. She won't even let me look at anything and see how bad it is. And it's all because of that day last summer.

I'll just tell you all about it. That way you can see for yourself how wrong my mother is.

We got up in the morning that day and found that the kitchen sink was stopped up. No water would run through the pipe at all.

Now everybody knows that there is a thing called a "trap" in the pipe under the sink. It's put there to trap sewer gas and to trap spoons and other junk and stuff that you might or might not

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want to see again. All you have to do is unscrew the pipe and clean out the junk, put it together again, and poof – it works.

"I can fix it," I tell my mother. "You get me a pipe wrench while I clean out the paper bags, the soup kettle, and the other stuff from under the sink."

She goes after the wrench, and I pull out the stuff so I can work on the pipe. Of course, the only place I had to put stuff was on the floor in the kitchen. It did make it a little hard for the rest of the family to eat breakfast and go out to work or play or whatever they were doing. It messed up the kitchen – I admit that freely.

When my mother came back with the wrench, I explained that before I took off the pipe, we would have to bail the greasy water out of the sink. You can see that if we didn't, when I opened the pipe, all the mess would pour down the open pipe onto the floor.

So she started to put the water into a pail with an old empty coffee can. It took her a long time. While she did that, I made myself some toast and jelly sandwiches and fried a couple of eggs.

When the sink was empty, I told my mother we'd better turn off all the water in the house. That way nobody could come into the kitchen to get a drink of water when we weren't looking. If somebody did, naturally the water would pour out on the floor.

It took us more time to locate the place to turn off the water. We got it turned off, all right. But while we were outside looking for it, my aunt came over from next door and decided to make a fresh pot of coffee.

When we got back to the kitchen, she was trying to turn on the faucets to get water.

We explained what the trouble was, so she went home to make the coffee. She said she'd bring some back for us later.

I picked up the wrench and put it around the pipe, but the pipe wouldn't turn. It was old and rusty.

"You hold it right there, Mom," I said to my mother. "You kneel right there and hold the wrench, and I'll get the hammer. I'll hit that old wrench a couple of thumps, and we'll have the old pipe open in no time."

She nodded her head at me. She's a little on the heavy side, so I guess she found it hard to talk under the sink like that. Anyway, she held the wrench.

I was starting for the garage to get the hammer when the phone rang. Now I couldn't expect my mother to come out from under the sink to answer it, so I picked it up fast. It was for me anyway.

It only took about ten minutes to help my friend Tim make up his list of players for the pony league game that afternoon. I was just going to hang up when I heard a crash out in the kitchen.

I slammed the phone down and went to see what made the crash. It was my mother.

The wrench had slipped off and she had lost her balance. She had fallen forward and her head had bumped against the back kitchen wall under the sink. Somehow, she got her neck stuck in between the two pipes where they bend up and around. It was an accident that couldn't happen again in a million years.

Naturally, she tried to back out. But when she put her left foot back, she stuck it right into the soup kettle on the floor. The kettle slipped, and my mother was stretched out almost straight. Her head was caught under the sink, and her foot was caught in the kettle. That must have made the crash, I figured.

She was making some funny noises, but I guess it's hard to talk with your neck between two pipes. Anyway, I was smart enough to know she couldn't stay there if I was ever going to get that pipe fixed.

I reached over and put my arms around her middle so I could pull her out, but she made a louder noise, a little like a scream. I thought I'd better stop.

I got down on my stomach and crawled back to where I could see her face. She was looking pretty hot, crowded under there that way. I could see she was trying to talk to me.

"Fire! Fire!" That seemed to be what she was saying. I listened and sniffed real hard a couple of times. I didn't smell any smoke.

She was looking at me like she wanted to kill somebody. She tried to talk some more. "Get firemen! Get firemen!"

"Why? There isn't any fire," I said. "You're just steamed up."

A funny look came over her face. She might be feeling faint I thought. It really was a funny look she had.

"HELP! HELP!" She sort of whispered it.

"What's going on here," said my aunt suddenly.

I looked back, and I could see her face as she bent down to see us cuddled up there under that old sink.

My mother banged the soup kettle. "Help! Get firemen!" My mother sounded a lot stronger again.

My aunt's face was suddenly gone. I could hear her running out the kitchen door, yelling for the neighbors as loud as she could.

I would have stayed there with my mother under the sink, but she had her eyes closed. I thought she might want to take a nap or something, so I backed out and stood up.

Then, I remembered I still needed the hammer. I went out the kitchen door to the garage. I got the hammer and went back into the kitchen just as the fire engine came tearing up the street. Naturally, all the neighbors came tearing out of their houses, too.

My aunt let the firemen into the house through the front door. Man, I didn't know firemen looked so big. With those wild hard hats and big, heavy jackets they look ready to fight anything, not just a little fire.

They were carrying axes with long handles, too. And they had boots on. The boots squeaked when they walked around on the kitchen floor.

"Where's the fire?" the first fireman asked.

"Oh, there isn't any fire," I said.

"What is this, some kind of a gag? You can go to jail for giving a false fire alarm, you know," he said.

The guy with the word "chief" on his hat was starting to lick his little yellow pencil so he could write something down on his little pad.

Just then, the soup kettle banged up and down a couple of times. That caught their attention.

My aunt came into the kitchen. She was all out of breath. It was funny to see her try to squeeze in past those giant firemen.

"It's my sister. She's stuck under the sink. Can you get her out?"

Right away three of the men bent and squatted down to see where she was stuck. One of them whistled. He sounded like a carpenter does when he's just cut the boards for a whole side of a house about two feet too short. I could tell this was going to be an interesting thing to watch.

"Get a stretcher," ordered the chief. "We'll have to let her rest on that while we hacksaw the pipe."

"But you'll ruin the pipe!" I said. "Can't we do it with the wrench and save the pipe?" I knew my mother would like that idea. She's always yelling at me about being careful with things that cost money.

The soup kettle banked up and down. "Help! Help!" came from the pipes under the sink.

Just then two firemen came back with the stretcher. Easy as can be, four of the firemen lifted my mother gently onto the stretcher.

"I'll get the soup kettle off her foot," I said. I started pulling off the kettle, but she kept kicking it back and forth.

"You'd better let me take it off," the chief said. He put out his hand, and the kettle stayed still as stone. He pulled it off, shoe and all, and handed it to me. "See, easy does it," he said.

Once my mother was straight on the stretcher she could talk better. She was a little upset, as you can understand, so a lot of what she said I tried to forget right then. When people are upset, you can't hold what they say against them. I've always known that.

The general idea was that she thought I should go out and get some fresh air. She gave me the rest of the day off. I didn't even have to worry about the sink anymore. I didn't have to come back until I felt like it.

Well, of course, I didn't want to go right then. I hung around and watched them hacksaw through the pipe. I went and got some towels to put over my mother's face as they opened the stopped-up part and some of the goop began to drip a little.

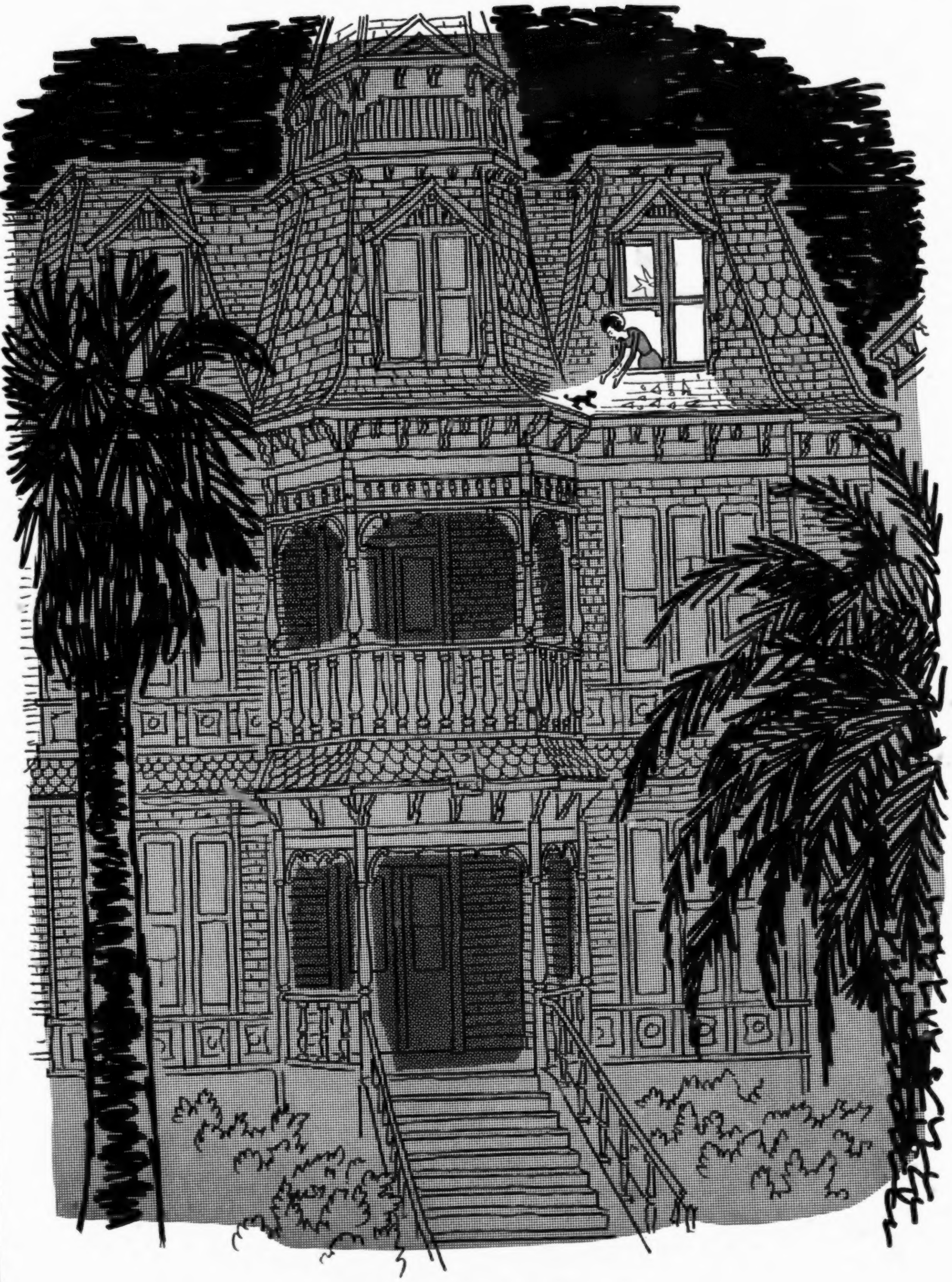
But when my mother was finally lifted out into the center of the kitchen and her head was free and good as new I thought I'd take that walk she suggested.

I really felt bad that those firemen sawed up that pipe. They just weren't as patient as they should have been. I know my mother was sorry when she got the plumber's bill.

But somehow, we've never been able to talk about that old stopped-up pipe. And I guess I'll never get my mother to believe it when I tell her I can fix something.

It doesn't seem fair to me, though.

DANGERS



AIR OF MYSTERY

by ROBERT CRUMB

"I'm delighted with the apartment," Marie said to the little old man.

"Glad to hear you say it. The furniture is a little old but it'll do. Maybe we can fix the place up for you after you're moved in." Mr. Harvey spoke slowly.

"Oh yes," Marie went on, "I could do so many things with it. And I love old houses. There's such an air of mystery about them."

"Not much mystery here, but the rent is only sixty dollars a month and we don't mind the dog," he said, referring to the miniature poodle which Marie held on a leash.

"His name is Jackie," Marie said, "and the rent, I'll take care of that right away." She took out her wallet from her purse and fished for the money.

Jackie began sniffing at the huge old couch. He began to whine, pulled away from Marie, and ran into the hall.

"What's the matter, itsie bitsie boy?" she asked in baby talk.

The dog continued to whine until a little growl crept into his throat.

"It's a strange place to him," Mr. Harvey said, looking over the rim of his glasses. "Dogs are like that sometimes."

"He has never acted like this before," Marie said as she picked up the dog. "What's the matter, baby? Did something scare you?"

The dog stopped whimpering, comforted by being held.

"Here's your sixty dollars," Marie said, holding it out to Mr. Harvey. "If you don't mind I'll move in this evening."

"Sure, whatever you want."

"My things are waiting for me at the station. I'll pick them up and be right back."

"While you're gone I'll open a couple of windows and air the place out. They are all screened except this one. You'd better leave that one closed or the flies will get in."

"Thank you very much. I won't be long."

When she returned from the station in a taxi, she took the small bag in one hand and Jackie in the other and started up the long, front steps. As she looked up at the place, it seemed something other than pleasant for the first time. In the early darkness it could have been something out of an Alfred Hitchcock movie. The house was an ancient jumble of corners, chimney, bay windows, and towers. The gray walls, badly in need of paint, rose to meet the steep roof. Way up there, on the third story, was her apartment. For just a moment a little chill went through her.

She put Jackie down and unlocked the door. Jackie sat in the hallway looking through the door. He refused to budge.

"Come on, scaredy-cat!" she said as she picked him up and carried him through the door.

She could hardly unpack her bags with him underfoot. He tried to stay close to her, pressing against her legs.

"You're a nuisance, just a big nuisance," she said a little irritated. But he was afraid, terribly afraid.

At nine o'clock Marie finished. She was just going to sit down when a knock came on the door. She opened the door a bit.

"Who is it?" she asked.

"Excuse me. I'm Mrs. Mears. I had this apartment before you."

The woman was tall and dark. Her eyes had a strange, faraway look in them.

"Yes?" Marie said.

"I thought, perhaps, I had left something behind."

"No, I found nothing except the furniture."

"Oh," she said in a whisper. Her eyes stared beyond Marie, into the room. She seemed to be looking for something.

"Do you mind if I come in and look around?" the woman asked in her flat voice.

"I guess not. Come in if you like."

Mrs. Mears gave her a cold look as she passed her. She walked from the front room to the kitchen, again across the front room, glancing at Marie as she passed. She went into the bedroom and then the bath.

Coming back into the living room she stopped and said, "I see you have an animal. That's nice. I am very fond of animals."

Without another word she walked out, closing the door behind her.

The room that had been so pleasant gave Marie an uneasy feeling now. Why had this woman come back? Why did Jackie, even now, lie whining at her feet?

Before she went to bed, Marie took an old blanket and fixed a bed for Jackie on the big couch in the front room. He cried when she put him there.

"Stay!" she commanded.

He wanted to come to her.

"Stay!" she repeated. The dog lay down on the blanket.

She went into the bedroom, put on her night clothes, and slipped between the covers. Although wondering at some of the strange goings-on, she lay there. This was her first apartment, her first time away from home. With those thoughts she fell asleep.

She was awakened by the wild yelping of Jackie. She sat straight up in the bed. Never had she heard such a frightened animal. Before she could turn on the light the terrified dog was already in the bed, trying to burrow under the sheets.

Marie jumped out of bed and ran to the other room. She switched on the light. There was nothing. The blanket, and the pillows from the couch, were on the floor. What's the matter with him, she wondered.

"Come here, Jackie," she said sternly. The dog refused to move from the bed.

"Come here," she repeated.

She went to him and lifted him from the bed. When she tried to take him back to the couch he began to growl, fighting wildly in her arms. She saw that it was no use.

"Oh, all right, you big baby. You can sleep on the bed with me. I've lost enough sleep for tonight."

When she finally fell asleep, with Jackie shivering in her arms, she was wondering, still wondering.

Marie awoke once again that night. It was an eerie thing. She had the strangest feeling that there was someone, or something, in that apartment with her. She could feel Jackie shivering on the bed with her. She said to herself, I'm being foolish, and slept again.

She was not well rested when she went to her first day on the new job. It had been a trying night. All day she wondered why the place gave her such a strange feeling and why Jackie was so disturbed by it all. She wondered, too, about Mrs. Mears and the reason she had come to call.

When she got back to the apartment that evening, she was tired and wanted so much to fall into bed. What she saw when she opened the door shocked her! The place was in a shambles! The lamps were overturned. The curtains torn down. There were things scattered all over the room. She saw that the window was broken, the window that had no screen. She looked about helplessly. Jackie was gone!

She dashed through the rooms of the apartment. He was nowhere to be found!

Then she looked through the broken window. There, perched on the roof, was Jackie. He was looking in at her, crying.

Marie threw open the window. The glass that was left in it fell to the sill. Jackie came to the window but did not want to come in. She reached for him and pulled him, against his will, into the room. He jumped from her arms and ran to the door. He stood there, crying to get out.

She ran to the door and threw it open. A gasp came from her lips. There was Mrs. Mears!

"I'm sorry, my dear," said the tall woman, "I was wondering if you had found anything?"

"No, no," Marie gasped, "nothing. Nothing at all. Go away, please."

"Your dog, he is frightened. Why?" Mrs. Mears asked.

"I don't know. Just go away, please!"

Mrs. Mears looked at her, seeming to question her. Quietly, she turned and walked down the sairs.

Marie tried to get Jackie back into the apartment. He refused to budge. He fought with her as if his life depended upon his staying outside. Marie was close to tears.

"Is something the matter?"

Marie looked up to see a girl about her own age. "No, I don't think so. My dog won't go into my apartment."

The girl smiled at her. "My name is Alice Stuart. I live right below you. I heard noise. I hope you don't mind my coming up."

"No, not at all. Please come in." Marie started into the room. Alice followed her but Jackie stayed outside, crying and acting afraid. Once again Marie pleaded with him to come in. The dog would not move.

"I'm sorry. My dog will not come into this room. Could we go to your place? I want to ask you some questions. I simply must talk to someone."

"Of course," Alice said, "I'll make some coffee."

Marie told Alice the story as best she could. About Mrs. Mears, the things that had happened the night before, and how the apartment had been wrecked that day.

"Jackie has never done such a thing before. He's afraid of something." Marie smiled weakly, "I don't believe in ghosts."

"I don't know," Alice said, "it's very strange. You asked about Mrs. Mears. Yes, she's a weird one. Her eyes give me the creeps. I've heard some funny sounds up there, like the fluttering and crying of birds. As far as I know she didn't have any friends and kept to herself. She was different all right!"

"I hate to ask you this," Marie said, "but do you think I could leave Jackie with you tonight? He's not much trouble."

"I'd love to have him. Wouldn't you like to stay, too? You don't really want to go back up there, do you?"

"I must. It's probably just my imagination. No, it's foolish to be frightened. If there is anything wrong I must find out what it is."

"I understand."

"It's my first apartment. I don't want to give up so easily. With Jackie in here I'm sure I'll do fine."

"Of course," Alice said, "and if there's anything else I can do to help, just call me."

Marie returned to her apartment. After breaking the remaining glass out of the window, she sealed it up with a piece of cardboard. Then she went into the bedroom and prepared for bed.

She tossed and turned for a long time before she finally dozed off.

It was about two o'clock in the morning when Marie awoke. She didn't know what had awakened her. It was that feeling again.

She lay in the dark for several minutes. That feeling haunted her. Then she heard it! It was so faint, just a small noise, a slow, quiet, movement.

"Who's there?" she called.

The noise stopped.

"Who is it?" Terror had come into her voice.

The silence hung heavy. She lay quietly in the bed, her ears strained to the quiet. Again she heard the noise! It was the sound of a heavy body, moving slowly across the floor!

Marie sat upright and began to scream. She turned on the lights and pressed against the bedroom wall, afraid to enter the front room. Before long she heard footsteps in the hall and heavy pounding on the door.

"Marie! Marie, what's the matter?" It was Alice's voice.

Marie ran through the front room and fumbled open the door. She fell into Alice's arms.

"Marie! What is it? What happened?"

"I don't know. There's someone in this apartment with me!" Marie sobbed.

Mr. Harvey came stumbling up the stairs in his bathrobe.

"What's the matter? You want to wake the dead, young woman?" he said crossly.

"Mr. Harvey, there's something wrong with this place. I'm not alone here."

"There, there, girl, you're all excited. Dry your eyes and tell me what's the matter."

Marie explained what had happened the last two days.

Mr. Harvey shook his head. "Are you sure you're not letting your thoughts get away with you?" he asked.

"No, it's not my imagination. My dog, you've seen how he acts."

"Dogs are funny, you know. Sometimes they just don't take to a place."

"But I heard sounds. I tell you I heard movements in this room!"

"You could have been dreaming."

"No, I was wide awake."

"Look, young lady, it's a new town and a new place to live. You're just upset, that's all. First time away from home, huh?" he chuckled.

"I don't know. I just don't know," said Marie, shaking her head.

"Why don't you sleep in my place tonight?" Alice asked.

"I should. I know I should but I feel so ashamed, like a coward. Really, Mr. Harvey is probably right."

"I know I'm right. I'm going back to my room now. Please, no more screaming tonight. You might wake the other people. They're a little finicky about their sleep, you know."

The old man left them alone in the room.

"Are you sure you don't want to stay with me?"

"No, I'm being foolish, very foolish. You go back and get some sleep. I'll be all right."

"You're sure?"

"Very sure. I'm sorry to be such a problem. Say, why don't you have dinner with me tomorrow night? I bought a chicken. We'll have fried chicken. I'm a pretty good cook, they tell me."

"I'd love to," Alice said.

"That's good. Perhaps it will help me get rid of my fears of this place."

Alice left soon after and Marie went back to bed. She did not sleep, however. She lay awake until morning, listening to every creak in the old house and every noise in the walls. She heard nothing that sounded like the noises which had disturbed her before.

At seven o'clock she arose and prepared for the day's work. She looked carefully about that baffling front room. Nothing was out of place. She sighed, took the chicken out of the refrigerator to thaw, and left the apartment.

When she returned that evening she was tired from lack of sleep but looked forward to having dinner with Alice.

She turned the key in the lock and stepped inside. Already it was getting dark and gloomy in the evening light. She dropped her handbag on the couch and went directly to the kitchen to prepare the chicken. It was gone! She had left it right there in the sink. She knew she had!

"That's enough!" she said out loud. "I know that chicken was there!" I'm going to see about this!" She was already half way down to Mr. Harvey's room.

She knocked loudly on the door and heard him come limping across the room.

"What is it?" he said as he opened the door just a crack. "Oh, it's you."

"Yes, it's me, Mr. Harvey," she said pushing her way in. "Was anyone in my apartment today?"

"Why no. No, I have the only key besides yours. Why do you ask?"

"Because someone has been in there. I put a chicken out to thaw. It's gone, Mr. Harvey, and don't tell me that I have been dreaming or that my mind is playing tricks. I don't dream chickens, Mr. Harvey, I put that chicken in the sink!"

"Are you –"

"Yes, I'm sure. Now, I want to get to the bottom of this and I want to get to the bottom of it right now!"

"What do you think – "

"My dog won't go into that place! I heard movement and noises! Now, the chicken is missing! Something odd is going on here."

"I can't figure it out. . . ."

"Is there any other entrance to that room?"

"No."

"And no other key?"

"I don't think so, unless Mrs. Mears had one made."

"Who is this Mrs. Mears?"

"I didn't know her very well. She kept to herself most of the time."

"Don't you know anything about her?"

"No, but that she talked to herself. I heard her do that. She trapped pigeons, too. I could see the trap up on the window ledge."

"Trapped pigeons?"

"Yes, she had a cage or something. The birds would come in to feed and couldn't get out. I don't know what she did with them, ate them, I guess. Some people do, you know."

"I've heard that," Marie went on. "Did you know anything else about her? What kind of a job did she have?"

"I don't rightly know. She did mention it once, though. I can't remember . . . oh yes, she worked at the zoo."

"Her job had a long name. Sounded kind of important. She was a . . . a . . . herp . . . herpetologist or something like that. I don't know what it means"

Marie thought. She had heard that word before. It was familiar but she couldn't place it.

"Do you have a dictionary, Mr. Harvey?"

"Yes I guess there's one around here someplace." He sorted through a pile of books. "Yes, here it is. You find it," he said. "Your eyes are better than mine."

Marie took the dictionary quickly. "H . . . her . . . herp," she said to herself. "Here it is, herpetologist. 'One who is versed in the natural history of reptiles'."

Marie looked up from the book. "The movements . . . the dog . . . the pigeons and the chicken. Reptiles! Mr. Harvey, there's a snake in that room!"

Marie ran out the door and up the stairs.

"Alice! Alice!" she shouted, "call the police!"

"What's up?" Alice yelled in alarm, as she opened her door.

"There's a snake in my apartment!" Marie answered as she swept by.

If Marie had been thinking, she would not have gone into her apartment, but she threw open the door and dashed across the floor to the lamp beside the couch. As she switched on the light, she stepped on something. The floor beneath her feet became a live, thrashing monster!

There it was! A giant thing, recoiling as she jumped back against the opposite wall. The snake, brown and gold and fully nine feet long, glided across the floor toward her. The beady eyes were fixed on her. The heavy body had a bulge in the middle which made it awkward for him to move.

Marie's voice failed her. She slid along the wall, making a wide curve around the room to reach the front door. The snake followed, its eyes fixed on her. It was getting closer and closer. Then Marie screamed and fainted into the outstretched arms behind her!

When Marie awoke she heard voices in the next room.

"Where am I?" she said weakly.

"You're with me. In my bedroom. You've had a pretty bad shock." Alice smiled down at her kindly.

In the next room the voices droned on.

"Yes, it is my snake. It's a boa constrictor." Mrs. Mears said in her flat voice. "I brought him from the zoo so I could study him more closely. He disappeared two days before I moved. I thought that he had gone through the door when I was moving my things. I wasn't sure, of course. I searched the apartment carefully and could find no trace of him. I had no way of knowing that he had made a nest in the back of the couch."

"Why didn't you inform someone?" the policeman asked.

"I didn't want anyone to know. I might get into trouble, you see. The snake is harmless enough. He wouldn't hurt anyone. He might have taken the dog, yes, but not the young lady. When he came after her, it was only to show affection. No, he wouldn't have hurt her. Besides, he wasn't hungry. He had eaten the chicken. After he swallowed the chicken, the bulge kept him from getting back into his nest in the couch."

Marie caught a glimpse of Mrs. Mears through the open door of the bedroom. The huge snake was coiled about her, resting its head against her shoulder. Marie turned away.

The officer spoke again. "Well, we'll have to take both of you down to the station to see what has to be done about it. Come along, now."

Jackie jumped up on the bed and gave Marie a wet kiss.

"Do you feel better now, baby?" Marie asked. "Next time, I'll trust your feelings a little more."

"He was smarter than the rest of us," Alice laughed.

"Of course. We won't have chicken, though. I could never stay up there again. Memories, you know. Tomorrow I'll pack my things and go apartment hunting."

"Why don't we hunt together?" Alice asked. "I'm a little tired of this place anyhow. Would you mind?"

"Not at all. I'd love it. That's a great idea, Alice."

"We could share the rent and it would be so much cheaper," Alice went on. "And Jackie seems to like me. There wouldn't be any problem there. You wouldn't have to be scared with two of us in the house. Marie? Are you listening? Marie?" Alice looked down at her. She was in a deep, peaceful sleep.

THE RETURN

by MORRIE GREENBERG

The blue Chevy sped down Highway 6. Mr. Gomez gripped the wheel confidently. Jim sat next to him and stared out the window. Jim was glad his camp counselor had agreed to drive him home. He knew his mother did not like mountain driving. He also figured that she would not want to ask any of the neighbors to drive. She wasn't too proud that he was graduating, he thought. Not when it was from a detention forestry camp.

Jim wondered about his mom and sis – about how they would take his coming back. Mom and Sis were all the family he had.

Mr. Gomez interrupted Jim's thoughts.

"Jim, I was just thinking about your first week up at camp. You know, you've come a long way since then."

"Yeah, I think I have."

"Remember that stunt you pulled the first week when you were out on a firebreak?"

Jim thought back to that first week. Boy, it seemed like a lot more than nine months ago. It was the first time he had been up on the firebreak line. The adult fire marshal had told him to quit goofing off and get back to work. Jim's hands were blistered by then. Mad at the way the man said it, Jim grabbed the handle of his shovel and lifted it high in the air. "Listen, you dumb jerk," Jim yelled, "my hands is blistered. I ain't workin' like this for no fifty cents a day." The funny thing was, Jim now remembered, he did not even realize he had the shovel in his hands. Sure, he was mad. Sure, he wanted to tell the fire marshal off – though he learned better later – but he must have looked like some kind of a crazy man. Later, Pete and some other buddies told him about it – how he was shaking like a leaf with the shovel pumping up and down in his hands. He'd always have Pete to thank. Pete had thought pretty fast then. He just socked Jim in the jaw, and Jim went flying right into the firebreak.

Jim smiled to himself as he remembered that sock.

"Yeah, I sure do remember that business at the firebreak, Mr. Gomez. I figured it was my first and last week at camp."

Mr. Gomez kept his eyes on the road and laughed.

"You know, Jim, I think you've come a long way since then. I've never had any reason to be sorry I went to bat for you that day."

Jim knew what Mr. Gomez meant. They had talked about shipping him back to Juvie. Then, after a long talk with the camp director, Mr. Gomez had let Jim stay. Mr. Gomez had known how upset Jim was because no one had been up to see him that first visitors' weekend. Jim had felt pretty rotten. Mr. Gomez had talked about all this with the camp director.

Now, as the car sped along, Jim looked out the window. He looked down at the diploma he held in his hand. He smiled to himself. He felt pretty proud of it. Pretty proud that he had been able to take the gaff. He thought about other things, too: the firebreak details; the last two fire calls. Tough. He showed he could do the job as well as any boy – or man, for that matter. Jim felt the diploma in his hand, and it felt good. He thought of Robby and Wesson. They had started with him but cut out after two weeks. They couldn't take it. Pete told him they go Y.A. – Youth Authority. Jim felt glad that hadn't been his route.

Mr. Gomez slowed the car down to 40 as it made a wide curve. Jim took his eyes off the road and stared down at the palm of his left hand. "Boy, you were right," Jim said, as though he were thinking out loud.

"About what?" Mr. Gomez asked.

Jim stared at his open hand.

"Well, that same day. You told me not to wear any gloves. You told me to suffer with the blisters. That my hands would get tough-calloused. That if I wore gloves my hands would not get used to the work. You said that I'd end up being proud of my callouses. Remember?"

"Well, I told you that and something else about callouses. I don't think you remember it, do you? You were pretty excited that day."

Jim laughed. "Callouses? No, I guess I don't remember. I guess all I do remember is that you gave me a break."

Jim shifted his eyes to the road and then back to his hands again. He was proud of the callouses. Then he looked at his fingers. Old things came back to his memory. He saw his fingers move quickly as they hot-wired a red '59 Chevy . . . he saw a cop walk towards him . . . saw his mom bawling like a two-year-old baby . . . heard the judge-referee say he had been caught twice for G.T.A. . . . heard his probation officer recommend forestry camp.

Jim was jolted out of his thoughts by a highway sign: CHATSWORTH TURNOFF AHEAD. They were just about home now. Who will be home to welcome me? Mom? Sis? His buddies, Rick and Ken? He hoped so.

"You sure you know where it is?" Jim asked.

"Oh, sure," said Mr. Gomez. "Here's the turnoff."

The car eased off the freeway. Mr. Gomez turned onto Jim's street.

"There it is. The white house. Where the green Ford is in front," Jim said.

Mr. Gomez pressed on the brakes.

"Well, Jim, this is it. Good luck. Give us a call. Let us know how you are doing. Oh, yeah, and remember what I said about callouses."

"Callouses? Oh, okay. Okay. Thanks, Mr. Gomez. Goodbye."

The car sped off.

Jim wondered, "Now, why'd he say that about callouses?"

Jim was happy, but he was surprised at how nervous he was. He walked to the front door and turned the handle.

"Darn, it's locked," he groaned.

He rang the doorbell. No answer. Jim groaned again. Then he remembered. He looked under the doormat. Sure enough, his mother still kept the key there. He let himself in.

He called out, "Hello!" No one answered. He was surprised.

"Still the same ol' crummy house," he thought.

He called out, "Mom. Sis. I'm home!"

Still no answer. Jim walked through the house to his room. Nothing seemed changed. He didn't feel like going through his things. He wandered into the living room. Creeps! What kind of a homecoming is this? He realized he was hungry. He had felt so excited when he felt camp that he had skipped lunch. Now he was starved. He moved into the kitchen. He reached in the breadbox and pulled out a half a loaf of bread. He unwrapped it. "Lousy stale bread," he muttered out loud. He slammed the bread, wrapper and all, into the sink. Where the heck are they? Jim looked at the clock. It was almost five. He knew his mom got off work at the restaurant at three. Sis got out of school at about the same time. Their only son and brother comes home and this is what he gets. A big fat nothing. Gone nine months, and this is it.

He opened the refrigerator door and grabbed a carton of milk. He started to gulp milk from the carton. He gasped and spit out the milk from his mouth. "Oh, no! Sour milk!" he moaned. "What a big deal homecoming this is!" Jim was steaming. He slammed the refrigerator door shut. He made a tight fist and smacked his closed fist hard against the refrigerator door. He winced with pain.

His insides churned. Nine months away from home and this is what he got — an empty house. He looked at the kitchen clock again. They had plenty of time to get home and see him if they wanted to. They just didn't feel it was important enough. I've had it, man, Jim thought. I've had it up to here. What to do? A thought crossed Jim's mind: Let's give Mom's wheels a little drive. He knew where his mother kept the extra set of keys to the Ford. Jim opened a kitchen drawer all the way and peered in. Yep, she still kept them there. He reached in and took the keys. He knew he was not allowed to drive, knew for sure he'd go ripping around and get into more trouble. But what the heck! Jim started toward the car parked at the curb.

Jim only took a few steps toward the front door. Then something inside him clicked. He actually said it out loud. "I'm not a punk kid any more. Man, what am I pulling this punk kid stunt for?" He walked back to the kitchen and flung the keys back into the drawer. Very slowly he slid the door closed. He took a deep breath. Guess I need a little fresh air, he thought.

Jim walked out the front door. Just as he did, he heard a familiar voice.

"Jim, oh, Jim."

It was old lady Baker, who lived next door. Well, he thought, at least someone is going to give me the big hello. He walked toward her.

"Jim, would you mind moving a chair for me?"

Jim almost flipped. Nine months away. His mom and sis don't even bother to be home, and Mrs. Baker don't even give him a "Welcome back." Jim sighed and started toward her house.

Mrs. Baker motioned Jim to her front door.

Jim pushed the door open and walked in.

The next few minutes would always be a blur to Jim. His mouth dropped open. Jim could hardly believe his ears and eyes. He heard people calling and yelling, "Hi, Jim!" "Welcome back, Jim!" "Hey, Jim!" There was a big sign across old Mrs. Baker's living room. It read, "WELCOME BACK, JIM." And the dining room table! It was covered with food. And there were his mom and kid sister. They rushed at him and smothered him with hugs. And, sure enough, there were his buddies, Rick and Ken. And Mr. Gomez was there, too. Jim fought back the tears.

A few minutes later, Jim got Mr. Gomez in a corner.

"Say, Mr. Gomez. I remember now what you told me about callouses that day. You said that with callouses my hands would get tough and be able to take it better. But you said something else. You told me to get callouses on the inside, too. You said that with callouses inside, when a tough break came along I wouldn't do anything stupid. You said that when I got on the outs, and somethin' went wrong, that's the time I'd know if I had callouses inside."

Mr. Gomez smiled in amazement, "That's right," he said.

"Well, Mr. Gomez, I know I got 'em."

Mr. Gomez looked puzzled as Jim shot him a big, broad grin.

FREEWHEELING

by A. C. BROCKI

Brian held the wheel firmly like a race driver. He added power as he eased his brother's precious hardtop around the climbing left turn. The sassy sound of the tail pipes echoed from the wall of jagged rock along the steep mountain road, and probably echoed again from the deep canyon below.

He was beginning to feel uncomfortable about letting Sue and the other couple talk him into driving to the mountains to see the snow. The best way out now, he thought, was to stop giving in to their crazy ideas so he could get the borrowed car home in one piece.

"I thought there'd be snow all over the place," Marilyn complained from the back seat.

"Yeah," Sue said, sitting close to Brian. "And there's nothing but wet dirt and a few dusty trees."

An oncoming car screeched around a sharp turn, its wheels almost a foot over the double yellow lines. Brian turned to the right until he could feel the gravel through the right tires. He held the wheels there. A suck of wind sounded as the two cars passed less than a foot apart. Brian slid back into his lane.

"I'm getting sick," Marilyn groaned.

"Look straight ahead," Brian said.

"I can't. You keep turning and throwing me from side to side."

"Yeah," Gene said, "she almost broke my arm, bouncing off me on the last turn."

Marilyn slid forward on the rear seat and tried to look out the front window. "It's no use," she said finally. "The white lines are OK, but the yellow ones keep turning. I'm going to be sick."

Brian thought of the custom upholstery his brother had just put in, deeply padded rolls of red and white vinyl. And the deep-pile red nylon rear floor rug!

"Put your head out the window and get some fresh air," Brian ordered.

Marilyn squealed when the wind hit her.

"What's the matter?" Gene asked.

"I've got bad hair," Marilyn said. "And a fifty-mile-an-hour wind isn't going to help." The wind stretched her words out of shape.

"I think you'd better stop," Sue shouted over the noise of the wind. "She doesn't look too good."

Brian stayed in the car. He looked at his passengers, now all sitting on the white guard rail like a row of birds. They were fun to be with at lunch time or at a party. Out here, forty-five miles from the city, it was different. He wondered if he could count on them. They wanted to do such crazy things. He hoped he could get them back in one piece, too.

Suddenly, Brian remembered the gasoline. They had bought only six gallons at the last station. He promised himself he would turn back when he got down to a quarter of the tank. He checked the gauge. The needle climbed to halfway between the quarter and the half-tank markers, still more than enough to get home on.

"It's down there under the trees!" Sue shouted. She pointed to the bottom of the deep, shaded canyon.

"Geez," Gene said. "She's right. There's enough snow down there for the Olympic Games."

They all worked on Brian to take them down to the snow. He finally gave in.

The side road they found was only a car wide and deeply rutted. Brian drove slowly. He honked at every turn. He hoped a hot shot wouldn't come dragging up the dirt road.

"You're driving like a little old lady from Pasadena," Gene said.

"Don't knock him," Marilyn said. "At least he isn't making me sick."

Brian felt like saying, "Maybe you'd like to drive!" but he held back. Gene might take him up on it, and they would go screaming down the mountain like an avalanche. That would be the end of the car, and maybe the end of all of them.

Halfway to the bottom, they entered the cool shade of many tall pine trees. Patches of snow were on each side of the road. The road itself was clear. Brian expected the tires to slip into the wet-looking dirt, but the surface was hard, as if frozen. He drove on, somewhat faster.

The road went up a little before dipping to the canyon floor. A glassy look at the top of the rise caught Brian's eye too late. Suddenly the car was sliding sideways toward the edge of the road. The freely turning steering wheel made Brian's stomach start to float.

"Whee!" Sue said. "It's like being on the Whip at the pier."

Brian remembered a barber-shop argument about driving on ice. He followed the advice of the most cool-headed speaker who had said, "Turn toward the slide about the thickness of a feather.

Press on the gas as if it cost a million dollars an ounce. Then turn out about two feathers."

The rear end slipped to one side like the tail of a fish, as Brian added power. Finally the rear wheels took hold. The car inched toward the edge of the ice. When the rear wheels hit the iceless dirt, the car shot forward. Brian's stomach stopped floating.

At the bottom of the canyon the road went through the stream bed and up the other side. "End of the road," Brian said with relief.

"All the good snow is on the other side," Gene complained.

"Yeah," Sue added, "and that river is more than twenty feet wide and looks twice as cold. We'll never get across it on foot."

Brian did not give in as quickly this time. He got out of the car and measured the depth of the stream with a broken branch. The stream was shallow, not more than six inches deep as far as he could reach. The rest of the way across seemed about the same depth. The water would barely cover the whitewalls. No harm would be done. Besides, other cars had made it. He could see tire tracks on both sides of the stream.

The trip across went smoothly until near the other bank. Then the front wheels fell into a trench up to the hub caps. There was a loud "klunk!"

"I hope it didn't break anything," Brian groaned to himself. "Sit tight!" he added loudly. And he stepped on the gas to free the front wheels.

When the rear wheels hit in and out of the trench, the car nosed out of the stream like a surfacing submarine, throwing water all over the bank. Underwater, the tips of the twin tail pipes sounded like a wide-open motor boat in the home stretch of a race.

"Whee!" Sue said, as the bounce lifted her toward the low top of the car.

Brian was too busy to get angry with her. He had to keep the car moving forward. The brakes were no doubt wet, and if he stopped on the upgrade, the brakes wouldn't hold. He slipped into second gear, added power, and pushed on the brakes to squeeze out the water. In less than fifty feet the brakes were holding again. The engine ran smoothly, even though there was a strong smell of gasoline.

"Here's the place – here's the place!" Gene's voice got through to Brian. The place was a beautiful bowl-shaped side canyon covered with snow, and not a footprint on it.

"It's all ice," Gene shouted, returning from the slope. "We can come down like bullets, but we got to have something to slide on."

Sue and Marilyn put on their plastic rain boots and their raincoats.

"We could pull out the rear seat," Gene said. "It would dry out and your brother would never know."

Brian could see himself trying to explain the marred and torn vinyl to his older brother. "No!" Brian said firmly.

"How about the rear rug then?" Gene asked.

Finally, Brian let Gene take the red rubber front floor mat. That would be hard to hurt.

For a half hour they all thought of nothing but sliding or falling down the icy slope. On every trip down, the girls screamed.

Then Brian went off course and hit his tailbone hard on an unexpected dip. "Ooof!" he said. He stood up and rubbed his sore bottom. He felt cold all over. He swung his arms around his body and stamped his feet. The others realized they were cold, too. The girls hugged each other for warmth.

For the first time since they started the trip, everyone was silent at the same moment. The silence and the cold frightened them. They felt alone and lost.

"L–et's get out of here," Sue said.

Without talking, they shuffled back toward the car. Brian dragged behind him the red floor mat. It looked like a huge, wet, limp tongue.

Several yards from the car Brian knew that something was wrong. Maybe he smelled gasoline, or maybe he saw the wet ground under the engine. He gave the mat to Gene and hurried forward.

Hunched over the right fender, Brian rubbed the dirty glass of the sediment bulb with his fingers. He felt a sharp place where the glass had been cracked. He bounced on the fender, but could not see a telltale line of gasoline inside the glass.

"I'm getting scared," Sue said, looking up at the tiny-looking main road, which seemed miles above them. "We could freeze down here and nobody would ever know it."

"Put her in neutral and start her up," Brian called to Gene, "so I can see how bad she leaks."

The engine turned over a few times; Brian bounced himself off the fender. He swept his hand across his throat to signal Gene to cut the engine. "It pours out," Brian said. "We'll pump out all the gas before we make it all the way to the main road."

"Part way is better than nothing," Gene said. "Let's give it a try."

"Yeah," Sue said, "the sun will go down pretty soon. We might never get out of here."

"Not on your life," Brian said. "You guys have talked me into every crazy thing we've done today. Now you're going to do what I tell you."

"It's three against one," Gene snarled.

The girls sided with Brian and calmed Gene down.

"Do you have any nail polish in your purses?" Brian asked. The girls dumped the contents of their purses onto the back seat of the car. Between them, they had three small bottles of nail polish.

"Any particular shade?" Marilyn asked.

"Very funny!" Brian said. "Just give me all you have. Then all three of you get down to the stream. You fill that trench with anything you can lay your hands on, while I fix the car."

Dressed in loud mittens and woolen caps, raincoats and floppy boots, Sue and Marilyn ran down the road, looking like frightened clowns. Gene walked slowly behind them. Brian returned to the engine. He unloosened the thumb screw that held the bulb in place. He coated the broken edges of the glass with nail polish and held them together until they dried.

Sue and Marilyn clapped their hands when Brian arrived with the car.

Before Brian drove the car into the stream, he turned to the others. "If we make it across," he said, "I'm going to stop on the other side. All of you are going to get out and run ahead to the icy spot. Dig up some dirt and throw it on the ice so the tires won't slip. I'll be driving up slowly. That way we won't waste as much gasoline."

"My hands are tired from filling the trench," Marilyn protested.

"Yeah," Gene said. "You're trying to work us to death." Brian paid no attention to them. He drove across the stream, getting only the tires wet. Then he safely crossed the icy place they had scattered with dirt. "Hold your breath," Brian said when the others got back in. "We may make it if the gas doesn't leak." The needle pointed just above empty.

Finally, the car made it to the stop sign on the main road. Everyone in the car sighed when the four wheels were safely on the blacktop.

Brian turned off the engine and coasted. He remembered three upgrades on the way back. He figured he could get up enough speed on the downgrades to make it part way up each one before turning on the engine. He pumped on the brakes for the first downhill curve, in short bursts to keep the brakes from getting hot.

"You trying to make me sick again?" Marilyn asked.

"If you keep stomping on those brakes," Gene said, "you'll burn them out in less than five miles."

"What do you want me to do, drag my feet?" Brian asked.

"At least you can put it in gear on curves," Gene said.

"That would be bright," Brian answered. "We would pump out all the gas before we ever get to an upgrade."

The girls laughed. Gene moved back into the corner of the car and sulked.

Brian let the speedometer reach sixty-five at the bottom of the first grade. Up they zoomed, the wind whistling around the car. It sounded spooky and lonely without the comforting noise of the engine. Brian coasted up two upgrades without turning on the engine.

"I'm hungry," Marilyn complained just before the final upgrade. "As soon as we get back, let's go to a drive-in. I could eat two hamburgers stacked on top of each other."

"Not on your life!" Brian said. "If we make it back, the first thing we're going to do is dig deep in our pockets and come up with about three bucks. One buck for gas. One buck for a new sediment bulb. And one buck for a car wash. If there's any money left, we can eat."

The car slowed down to ten miles an hour on the final grade. Brian turned on the key. He shifted into second and eased out the clutch. The cold engine gave one chug and then a comforting hum. The needle was below empty, but it was still alive, flicking a little on turns.

Brian's whole body became tense when he saw the sign DOWNGRADE AHEAD, TRUCKS USE LOW GEAR. "Hold on!" Brian said. "I think we just might make it."

The car glided over the top without a cough. Brian again turned off the key. His body relaxed. It was all downhill to the gas station.

By the time they paid for the gasoline and the new sediment bulb, there wasn't enough money left for a car wash or for food. Brian parked under the street light in front of Sue's apartment. He made everyone pitch in washing the car.

"Man, it doesn't take much to find out what your friends are like," Gene grumbled as he scrubbed the left front whitewall. "All you have to do is take a trip with them."

"You can say what you want to," Sue said, wiping down the hood. "Brian may be mean, but he's the one who got us home."

Brian was bone-tired but happy when he drove the car into his brother's stall behind the apartment. He didn't care what the others thought of him. He had stood up to them, and he felt good inside. He had enough energy left to pat the car door lovingly. "You're clean and you're all in one piece," he said with pleasure.

THE TIP-OFF

by RICHARD HILL WILKINSON

The three police cars swooped down upon the lonely crossroads tavern. The lead car was being driven by Sheriff Steve Brooks. Beside him sat his chief deputy, Frank Melrose.

When the cars were within fifty feet of the tavern they stopped. The occupants piled out.

"Surround the place," Brooks ordered four of his men. "Frank, you come with me."

The two officers approached the tavern with drawn guns. The sheriff kicked the door open and the pair leaped inside.

The place was deserted except for the bartender who sat on a stool at the end of the bar reading a newspaper. He looked up and his eyes grew wide at sight of the policemen.

"What the –" he began.

"Sit still, bartender." Sheriff Brooks' eyes flicked around the room. "You alone?"

The bartender swallowed. "Ain't seen a soul since last night. Wh-what's up?"

"Maybe he's lying," said Deputy Melrose.

"He isn't lying," said the sheriff. "Anyone can see that."

"I'll look anyway," said the deputy. He moved past the bar and disappeared into a back room.

Sheriff Brooks went to the door. He ordered his other deputies to get the police cars out of sight and then to come inside.

The bartender blinked. "What's this all about?" He tried to sound brave, but his voice cracked. He looked rather young and scared.

The sheriff posted his deputies at windows and doors. Deputy Melrose returned from the back room and reported he'd found nothing.

Sheriff Brooks turned to the bartender. "Just sit still and keep quiet. Maybe you'll see some action. Nick Manelli's due here any minute."

The bartender's eyes flew open. "Nick Manelli, the dope smuggler? Coming here? W-why?"

"We got a tip he's heading for the border. He's meeting his girlfriend here before he makes his dash. This time we've got him."

"We hope," said Frank Melrose.

Brooks glared at his deputy. "Knock it off, Frank. This time Manelli doesn't have a chance."

"Maybe not. This isn't the first time we thought we had him, though."

"It's the first time we ever had such a hot tip."

The sheriff crossed to a window. Deputy Melrose took out his gun and spun the cylinder. The bartender stared, round-eyed, pale.

Minutes passed. Outside, the desert baked beneath the broiling California sun.

Suddenly the stillness was broken by a faint humming sound. The sound grew louder.

One of the deputies at the window said, "There's a car coming. A girl is driving."

The car came up to the tavern and stopped. The girl got out. Inside, the men waited tensely.

The door opened and the girl stepped inside. She stopped in surprise at sight of the officers. No one spoke. Her eyes flitted to the face of the bartender, who was sitting on his stool like a statue.

Brooks said, "Well, young lady, you arrived just in time for the party. Have a seat. Your boyfriend should be arriving at any moment."

The girl looked at Brooks, then at the grim faces of the deputies. Suddenly she laughed. She placed a hand on either hip and regarded Brooks scornfully.

"Just like he said it would be," she said. "Sheriff, I didn't believe him. I had to come up and see for myself."

"Didn't believe who?" Brooks snapped.

"Nick. I didn't believe Nick. He said he fixed it so you'd wait for him here. He arranged the phony tip-off. He wanted it that way so's he'd have a clear run to the border. I knew that Nick was smart, but I didn't think he was smart enough to pull one as good as this!"

Deputy Frank Melrose laughed, but there was no mirth in the sound.

Sheriff Brooks drew his lips flat against his teeth. "You're lying!" he told the girl. "The tip I got was one hundred percent. Manelli's going to be here."

"Sure he is," the girl taunted. "Like you said. Any minute now. Stick around and wait, Sheriff. You haven't anything better to do."

The officer swore. He told the girl to sit down. With a toss of her head she obeyed. Sheriff Brooks stared through the window. Five minutes passed. Then another minute ticked away. The girl spoke again.

"You're a smart one, Sheriff. You do things right. By now Nick's hit the border and is safely over."

Deputy Melrose grunted. "Listen, Steve, the girl's giving it to you straight. You can tell that. We're wasting time. Stick your pride in your pocket and let's call it a tough break."

The sheriff sighed deeply. The other deputies had risen and were flexing their muscles.

"All right." Sheriff Brooks glowered at the girl. "I've half a mind to take you along just to satisfy –"

"No go, Sheriff," the girl interrupted. "You haven't a thing on me." She stood up and with another toss of her head left the room. They heard the roar of her car's motor as she drove away.

Ten minutes later the last of the three police cars disappeared down the highway. The bartender moved his hands. The newspaper he had been holding fell to the floor. There was an automatic pistol clutched in his fist.

He opened the front door. The car driven by the girl was racing back toward the tavern. She braked it to a stop near where the bartender was standing.

"Hop in, Nick," she said. "We'd better get out of here fast. That sheriff seemed too sure of himself to suit me." They picked up speed as she turned into the highway. "Where's the real bartender?"

"Tied and gagged. He's under the bar. That dope of a deputy didn't have sense enough to look." Nick Manelli looked at the girl with admiration in his eyes. "Doll, for quick thinking you have me stopped."

The girl smiled with pleasure. "Who do you think gave them the tip-off?"

Nick spread his hands. "Ace Ryan. Who else? He didn't like the size of the cut I gave him from the last bundle we brought in from Mexico, and he was the only one who knew for sure that you and I were going to meet at the tavern." He laughed. "Who cares? We not only put one over on Ace but on the cops too. Cops! Stupid jerks!"

"Are they, Nick?" They had rounded a curve and the girl's eyes widened in sudden alarm. "Not that bunch, Nick. Not them. Sheriff Brooks knew that tip-off wasn't a phony. He had all the angles figured."

She braked to a stop only seconds before she would have slammed into a road block of the three police cars.

THE BIG SHOT

by **ROBERT J. FRANKLIN**

Carlos Franco led three shadows single file through the night across the empty lot. Blood pounded through his veins in nervous excitement. His breath came in hard, fast gulps. The inside of his mouth felt rough and dry. Tonight Carlos was the big shot. He was being initiated into the Vaqueros, the toughest teen gang in the neighborhood. Every Vaquero had to prove himself by leading the gang in a *strike* on his initiation night. The whole operation was Carlos', and he had planned it carefully, like a combat patrol in a war movie.

Behind Carlos was Pete Silvero, the real Vaquero leader. It was he who had approved Carlos' plan with an admiring eye – high praise from one who at eighteen had already been in Juvenile Hall twice and had been kicked out of three different high schools by the eleventh grade.

This was not a big operation; that was why only four boys were on it. They could have five times that many if needed. The Vaqueros were *boss*. Tonight Carlos would prove if he were tough enough for the gang.

Twenty yards from the corner, Carlos waved the others flat into the high weeds. Then he went forward alone toward the dim street light of the run-down cross streets. There were houses across from the field, and Carlos did not want to risk being seen. He crawled the last few yards to the curbing and carefully looked, to make sure no one was around. His fingers felt in the dirt until he found a handball-sized rock. Slowly he rose from the ground, threw the rock, and melted into the ground again.

The street light shattered with the noise of a giant firecracker. Broken glass showered to the blacktop pavement with the tinkle of little bells. The noise almost caused Carlos to panic. He had not expected it to be so loud. He held his breath and watched the houses. No one came out to see what it was. Maybe they had not heard.

Three shadows moved up to Carlos. Pete Silvero chuckled in Carlos' ear, "With an arm like that you ought to be in baseball." Pete's praise made Carlos forget his moment of fear, and Carlos began to think of the next part of his plan.

If his planning was right, the 9:30 bus would just now be letting off passengers a block away. From watching during the week, Carlos knew that only one passenger came down this street from that bus. The passenger was an old woman. He thought she must be coming home from a late work shift. This, being Friday, must be the night she carried the week's pay in her purse. All Carlos had to do was grab the purse from her hand and run.

While three Vaqueros waited to watch how he acted, Carlos slipped across the street and melted into the shadows of a large, overhanging pepper tree. The woman always walked along this sidewalk. The street was empty, and without the light it was almost pitch dark. The moon was a small sliver and gave no light.

Carlos hated the waiting. With nothing to do, he got nervous from thinking. He fingered a pair of brass knuckles that Pete Silvero had slipped into his pocket – just in case. In sudden self-disgust he pulled his hand away from the cold metal. Only a coward would hit an old lady. He wished he had made a different plan. He would rather prove his courage by taking on some guy from another gang, but the Vaqueros had a law – the first *strike* had to be for money to pay initiation dues. Taking the old lady's purse was the easiest way he could figure, and nobody would get hurt. Just grab and run. Then he could wear the secret tattooed "V" high inside his arm. The "V" would make him *boss* with all the tenth graders at school, and the older kids would think twice before trying anything with him. It would make him a big shot.

His mouth got all dry again, and he tried to work up some spit to swallow. Every minute seemed like an hour. He trembled with nerves. He wished he were home watching TV with his little brother. He thought of his mother and father. They had always been good to him. Why was he doing such a crazy thing? He began to think this wasn't such a good idea to be a Vaquero, a big shot. He got a funny feeling in his belly and wanted to call off the *strike*.

A noise from the corner turned his thoughts. Foodsteps, half shuffling, half clomping. He peered around the tree trunk and barely made out the half-stooped shadow coming toward him only fifty feet away. Every muscle in his body tensed. His heart pounded blood into his ears with a noise like a waterfall. Then, his eyes played tricks on him. The single shadow split into two shadows. The old lady wasn't alone! Now he made out the shape of the second shadow – a man. He groaned to himself, I can't go through all this again. It's now or never. The two figures were almost alongside him. He side-stepped around the tree as they passed, then, some force outside of himself made him lunge at the man from behind. The brass knuckles were on the hand that he swung toward his victim. The sudden rush caused the man to turn and throw up his arm in time to block the blow. A hard fist hit Carlos in the jaw and sent him backwards to the sidewalk. Before he could recover, a weight was on top of him, and fists were pounding his face without mercy. Almost unconscious, Carlos heard a noise like a car backfire. The weight on him slumped sideways.

Someone jerked him to his feet. Still dazed, he heard Pete

Silvero's fierce, hissing voice ordering, "Get out of here! Split up!" The three Vaqueros disappeared into the night. Carlos couldn't move. Everything was spinning around him, and he fell alongside the huddled body of the man. Not until then did he realize what had happened — Pete Silvero had *shot* the man. He trembled with a fear he had never known in his life. His whole body shook and shivered as he moaned, "What have I done? What have I done?"

Carlos didn't move — not even when the police car skidded to a stop alongside him. The policemen's voices seemed to come at him from another world. . . .

"Is he dead, Frank?"

"No, he's still breathing."

"Who's the kid?"

"Probably the fourth member of the gang. Seems to be in shock."

"They get all the others, did they?"

"Yeah. Somebody in one of those houses called when he heard the street light break. It's happened like this before. We had every street blocked less than five minutes after the call came in."

Carlos felt something cold snap around his wrists, and he felt himself being half-pulled, half-carried into the police car.

"They never learn, do they?"

"Nope. Never learn."

An ambulance screamed in and then screamed away with the man. The small crowd of watchers that appeared from nowhere stood silently. Their eyes burned into Carlos in the back seat of the police car.

This must be some kind of crazy bad dream, Carlos thought. Pretty soon I'll wake up and find I'm safe in my bed, and Mama will call me to come to breakfast.

But Carlos knew it was no dream when the driver turned on the siren to get through traffic on the way to the police station. He knew it was no dream when the handcuffs cut into his wrists. He buried his face in his hands.

OUTLOOKS

A MATTER OF GOOD FAMILY

by JOHN DURHAM

The following pages contain simplified excerpts from a long conversation between Dr. Agnes Jackson and Dr. John Durham. Both are professors in the Department of English at California is Negro.

Dr. Jackson was born in Pasadena, but moved to Los Angeles before she started to school. She attended elementary school at Avalon School and, later, 49th Street School. She went on to McKinley Junior High (now George Washington Carver Junior High) and Jefferson High School. She earned her bachelor of arts degree at the University of Redlands, her master of arts degree at the University of Washington, and her doctorate at Columbia University.

Dr. Jackson is an attractive woman in her early thirties. She has a trim figure, a brisk walk, and a ready smile. She speaks in a soft, pleasant, very precise voice.

DURHAM: Agnes, we both know that there aren't many Negroes in higher education. There are even fewer Negro women. There must have been something special in your life that made you want to earn all those degrees and become a college teacher.

JACKSON: I think it was my family.

DURHAM: What did your father do?

JACKSON: Well, my father is an interesting example of what can happen to people here. In Arkansas, the state he was from, he had taught in one of the colleges. He had been a leader in one of the fraternal organizations, I don't know which one. It may have been Lincoln. This is all before 1930.

In 1929, of all things to have happen to a Negro, he lost quite a bit of money.

DURHAM: That was in the stock market crash.

JACKSON: Yes. And so, all of my life, we were poor. You see, my father was in his forties when I was born, so he had quite a bit of living done before –

[illegible]

JACKSON: Oh, he was one of the most brilliant men I have ever known. A fine mind. And he had been educated not to be menial, in other words, not to knuckle down. He was a professor and an ordained minister. He gave lectures. He couldn't go clean lavatories or run elevators.

When he came to California, in '31, he couldn't find a job that was suitable for his education. He was not *given* one. The story that's told to me is that he wouldn't take the jobs that were available to Negro men, and couldn't find the kind of job that he was educated for. He was interested in helping Negroes who were beginning to come to California. He tried to establish adjustment schools, halfway houses between the southern farm background and the city.

DURHAM: They needed more schooling?

JACKSON: Right. My father got licenses from the city. He ran a number of these schools. This was a wild existence for us, because there was no money, ever. The money went into what was done for the people, and we sort of existed.

My mother took in laundry, for a number of years. At the age of ten, or eight, I was ironing shirts like a professional. I learned how to do many things which have been helpful to me as an adult. But at the time we thought it was quite hard because Daddy was always doing so many things. He was well respected by the ministers and the city. But there was no money in it. He didn't get the recognition he deserved.

DURHAM: Did you resent his neglect of the family when you were a child?

JACKSON: Yes, I did. My father had two families to support. My brother and I are his second set of children by his second wife. All six of his children went to college, and so I wore sweaters that had the end of the sleeve halfway up my arm. My sister had to have money to go to college.

Now as an adult, every year, every day, I see my father differently from the way I saw him then. I recognize now all the sacrifices he made and how bitter it was for him to know his own worth and not to be able to find his proper place in the society. When I write my first book, it will be dedicated to him.

When I think what my father had to push back down, inside himself, just to keep going – I don't think I could do it. He was a marvelous man.

You asked me earlier to what I owe my success. I've told you that it was good family.

DURHAM AND JACKSON: (Laughter)

JACKSON: You know, John, I mean that. It's very curious. My father was from the old school. He ran the household. I always said this about my daddy – my father died in 1959 – and I know he would understand. My mother was one of these meek persons. I used to say that if Daddy had come home and said, "Put the children in the oven and roast them," my mother would have said, "Yes, dear."

He really *ran* the household, you see.

But I do mean it when I say we inherited what money and class can't give. That is, I suppose, the ability to understand what one has to withstand.

DURHAM: You mean you inherited brains and guts, if I may put it more simply.

JACKSON: Yes. (Laughs) He was an amazing man.

(Dr. Jackson discussed a number of Negro writers, including James Baldwin, Gwendolyn Brooks, Ralph Ellison, Willard Motley, Phillis Wheatley, Richard Wright, and Langston Hughes.)

JACKSON: Maybe you don't know that Langston Hughes has written a series of Jess B. Simple stories. The off-Broadway play was called "Simply Heavenly."

"There's a character named Jess B. Simple. The meaning of the name is obvious. There's a fine collection of short stories called *The Best of Simple*. It's in a paperback.

Perhaps many Negroes would find Hughes' ideas in that book offensive. Many Negroes are still dominated by the white notion of what propriety is.

DURHAM: Maybe you'd better explain that.

JACKSON: It's a combination. I should have said Negro ideas of what they should do when they're with white people. There are certain things that Negroes do only with Negroes, a certain kind of behavior. Then there is behavior that is for the outside world, for whites. That behavior with whites is an attempt not to reveal the soul, not to be open to attack by the outside world.

The kinds of foods Negroes eat, for example. People seem to forget that almost *all* poor Southerners ate the same thing.

Whites ate chitlins – or chitterlings, as the word is spelled. Whites have eaten cornbread and the various greens. But Negroes think of these foods as Negro foods, as soul foods, and some Negroes are ashamed to be seen eating them.

To get back to Jess B. Simple. The stories are set in New York. Simple has to slip off and eat the foods he likes best, like neckbones and hog maw and chitterlings. His girlfriend, who is trying hard to make it in the white world, is always upset by his lack of propriety, by what she thinks are his bad manners. And Simple says, "You know, there's no harm in eating neckbones, but there is a great deal of harm in the atomic bomb." He's a philosopher, you see.

Jess B. Simple goes to integrated meetings to bring about brotherly love, in the very last story. He says he doesn't like to go to those meetings. They're so phony, and he falls asleep. He says if you just got some good jive music, and had a jam session, the people would find themselves integrating. They'd dance and eat and talk. And of course, it's true.

If people who are concerned about racial integration would look through Hughes' humor and take it seriously, I think they might see some truth. You see, I don't think the Negro should feel ashamed.

DURHAM: Neither do I. Isn't it true, though, that if Negroes want to be accepted by certain whites – and these are the whites whom Negroes distrust the most – they have to go along with white middle-class ideas about how one should act and talk?

JACKSON: Well, in our society we have caste and class. Caste is a separation of people because of color. Class has to do with money, and jobs, and living on the right side of town. That's a simple way of saying it.

Some Negroes have risen to the highest classes, with good educations, good jobs, lovely homes. In terms of money, they're superior, but the larger white society keeps them out because of caste. Many young people wonder what good it will do them to get an education. They'll still be Negroes, so their education won't matter. Or so they think.

You asked me if Negroes need to go along with middle-class patterns of behavior. I think that there is a need, but not because it is a white society. You go along because you must, to fit into the larger culture. We all want to find a place in this culture.

Negroes must see that people from different European backgrounds have had to fit in. Negroes have the edge on everyone in the country in some ways: they've been citizens the longest, for example.

DURHAM: What other tools does anyone, Negro or white, need to get ahead in this society?

JACKSON: Anyone who wants to advance in the society would want to read well, would want to handle his money well.

DURHAM: And would want to be able to use standard speech when it's useful.

JACKSON: Of course. I use standard speech all the time, but it doesn't separate me from Negroes who don't use it. People can use nonstandard speech very effectively, when they know what they're doing. But I don't change my speech to fit the speech of people in my family who haven't had the advantages of education. Some of them say, "We does." I don't feel that I have to say "We does" to talk to those people. I understand them and they understand me. I am myself, and each of those people is himself. That's all.

It's hard for someone to enter the business world, to get a job as a teacher, to get a job as an engineer, to get a job even as an office worker, unless he uses standard English. He's branded by the way he talks, if he doesn't.

My humanity doesn't have a thing to do with my speech. But society judges me by my language. So, if I'm practical, I must master enough standard English to be accepted. Then I'm more free.

DURHAM: When I grew up in Texas, even middle-class whites, many of them, didn't use standard English. Some Southerners are still proud of their nonstandard use of English. So I learned southern-white English, when I was a child. When I moved away from Texas to get an education, I had to learn a whole new language.

JACKSON: Did you put the old language behind you completely, or did you add the new language.

DURHAM: I added. I still use the Texas language when I want to, especially when I write fiction. It's not very different from the so-called Negro dialect. Some editors and some readers who have read my stories about Negroes have thought that I was a Negro. Of course, I've had to disappoint them when they see me in the flesh. The flesh is quite white.

Other confusions arise from my mixture of dialects. We had a gardener for a while, a Japanese fellow. He told me I didn't talk like other professors he knew. I asked him what he meant. He said the other professors didn't swear as colorfully as I do. He judged me by my speech.

JACKSON: He was really saying you're more down-to-earth than he is.

DURHAM: More down to something, anyway.

JACKSON: You know, in *Invisible Man,* Ralph Ellison shows how beautiful such down-to-earth language can be, that and the differences between the speech of ordinary people and the speech of educated people.

DURHAM: Who's that character toward the end of *Invisible Man*, the one who changes so often?

JACKSON: Rinehart. The man who wears so many masks. He changes to fit the situation.

DURHAM: Of course Ellison is trying to say the Negro has to hide behind masks to get by in a white society. I sometimes think that many Negroes don't understand that whites also have to wear masks – pretend to be what they're not – if they want to fit in, if they want to keep jobs and friends and to get what they want. You have to be a kind of secret agent to survive, white or black.

JACKSON: It's a human thing. We all have to pretend at times.

DURHAM: But inside ourselves, behind the mask, we should remember who we are. We should never become the mask.

JACKSON: You know, John, I think Negroes should remember this: we have learned to adapt. We have had to adapt, to survive. We have had the whole world looking at us as someone different. Almost every Negro has had this experience. But within the last five years we've learned that many whites are having to adjust to Negroes. These white people are painfully, the old saying about some of my best friends are –

DURHAM: Some of my best friends are whites?

JACKSON AND DURHAM: (Laughter)

JACKSON: I was going to say Caucasians. Sometimes I feel for them because they don't know how to be natural with Negroes. I say, "Now, look, you've just started this adjustment bit. I've been doing it for three hundred years." My grandparents were slaves, John.

DURHAM: And my great-grandparents owned slaves.

JACKSON: It shows you that time can do something. The progress has gone much too slowly, though.

DURHAM: Yes, much too slowly.

JACKSON: If all of us could go a little more toward the other, we'd all be better off. Negroes, some of them, feel they've been adjusting too long. They reject whites because they're whites.

DURHAM: Whites are human beings, too? (Laughs)

JACKSON: Yes. The Negro desire for revenge, the human desire to make others suffer – we must rise above this. We shouldn't inflict the same problems on others that we have suffered from. It's so hard to recognize that.

DURHAM: Let me ask you what may be a painful question, Agnes. Have you ever run into prejudice from students or other faculty members as a college teacher?

JACKSON: I don't feel any prejudice. We're too well bred to show these things, you know. No one wants to be labeled a bigot, not in academic circles, anyway. I don't feel that there's any prejudice at all. Even so, here, in this cosmopolitan community, where people from all backgrounds come together on campus, one would expect not to be looked at with surprise. I don't think my dress is particularly different from that of other women teachers. You know, I'm a faculty member, and I expect certain faculty rights. And I have the students and the clerks all jumping. If you're Doctor Jackson of the English Department, you get respect. But they always have to stop and get used to the fact that this Negro face could be a faculty face. That's the only problem I find. The white society doesn't expect to find Negroes in certain positions.

This always amuses me. I think there's no malice.

DURHAM: I think what you're talking about may come partly from the size of this place. I get the same thing frequently. I don't know why, but I don't seem to look like a professor. I don't talk like a professor, either, according to the gardener. I'm frequently mistaken for a student. A woman student in one of my classes this fall mistook me for a student the first night.

She was very embarrassed, when I went to the lectern and began outlining the course. I think I had on a sport jacket without a tie, that night. She judged me by appearances. I'm happy to say she earned an A, anyway.

JACKSON: Yes, I'm sometimes mistaken for a student. I'll be walking across campus and meet one of my colleagues who'll look right through me. I'm just another Negro student until I say, "Why, hello, Dr. So-and-so." Then he'll say, "Why, Agnes, I didn't recognize you."

DURHAM: You know, that may be just because you're an attractive woman. Somehow, one doesn't expect to find a good-looking woman in the role of a professor.

JACKSON AND DURHAM: (Laughter)

DURHAM: Let me ask you one more question, Agnes. You've spent all those years in college and graduate schools. You stayed in high school and finished that before you went to college. Has it all been worth the time and effort? Is your life better than it would have been otherwise?

JACKSON: Yes, I have a good life. It could be better, perhaps, but, then, whose life couldn't?

DURHAM: It's been a real pleasure talking to you, Agnes.

THE DUKE OF ELLINGTON

by CHARLES M. WEISENBERG

Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington began life as just one more Negro boy in segregated Washington, D.C. There was nothing special to set him apart from the other young Negroes. He went to school, attended the movies, played baseball, and fought white boys in the streets. He lived in a Black ghetto where he acquired some of the special cultural background that belongs to the American Negro, including the music. On top of it all, Ellington had a quiet and calm outlook that has remained with him to this very day. It was because of his easygoing ways that a friend started calling him Duke.

The Duke's first experience with music gave no sign of the great talent that he was to display in later life. Ellington took his first piano lessons when he was only seven years old. He began to learn about musical notes and chords and keys. Duke, however, was much more interested in playing ball on a vacant lot behind the YMCA. In those early years Duke learned much about music from a friend who couldn't even read a note of music. Duke's friend played piano by ear, made up tunes on a rubber band stretched around a cigar box, and sang beautifully. It was from this friend that Duke learned how music could be used to express feelings and emotions. Still, he wasn't really interested.

Duke Ellington really wanted to be an artist. The Duke liked to draw and work with colors. He went to the leading Negro trade school in the Capital so he could become a commercial artist. The Duke saw his future as an artist, poster maker and sign painter. When the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People held a poster contest, it was Duke Ellington who took first prize. Just before he left high school, one of the best art schools in the country offered the young Ellington a scholarship, but the Duke never went on with his art studies. He found a girl friend, and she took him back into the world of music.

Edna Thompson was in Duke's class and lived near his house. They went on picnics and did lots of things together. Sometimes they talked about music. Edna worked harder at her music studies than Duke because she wanted to know more about how music was put together. She was the one who made Duke practice regularly and study seriously. He entered a music class at school, but when the Duke really got interested he started taking private lessons again. The lessons were only part of Ellington's musical education. "Those ragtime pianists sounded so good to me! And they looked so good! Particularly when they flashed their left hands," says the Duke. He was so taken by ragtime that he spent most of his time working at it, especially his left hand. Ragtime was a piano style that greatly influenced the development of jazz music.

In those years before World War I, rent parties were one of the most popular forms of entertainment in Negro communities. The price of admission to a rent party and the price of the drinks went to the host so that he could pay his rent. These parties were common in Washington, D.C., as well as Harlem and other big centers. The ragtime or jazz piano player was the main attraction at the rent parties. Duke Ellington heard some of the best piano players of the day at these parties, but he couldn't copy their tunes. "So I developed my own stuff," he said. The Duke was still going to school and working behind a soda fountain at the Poodle Dog Cafe. He was only 16 when he wrote his first song and called it "Soda Fountain Rag."

Ellington got a chance to play his song one night after a heavy-drinking piano player drank too much and passed out in one of the local cafes. The young Duke jumped over the fallen musician and started playing his "Soda Fountain Rag." He played the same song all night. First as a rag, then a waltz, a one-step, a two-step, a fox trot, and a tango. "They never knew it was the same piece," recalled the Duke, who had no other original material to offer at the time. Soon after that, Ellington began his career as a working musician by forming a band called the Washingtonians.

For the first few years Ellington could not make enough money to live on his music alone. He did sign painting at home, putting his other talent to work. The band began to get a following, but getting paid was rather difficult. Sometimes they would be offered five dollars for a night's work. Often fights broke out in the dance hall before the night was over, and then there would be nobody around to pay the five dollars. By 1920 Duke Ellington was beginning to make a living as a musician.

Even in the 1920's there was only one place for a jazzman to make it big – New York City. The big eastern city did not have the same kind of southern segregation that Ellington and his men had become used to in Washington, D. C. Ellington's band felt a new sense of freedom, finding it easier to move from the black world into the white world and back again. They found Harlem a tense and nervous community where men often drank too much and the sound of jazz seemed to express the feelings of many people. The Ellington band began to add its voice to the sounds of Harlem.

Duke Ellington and his orchestra had their first big success with what was then called "jungle" music. It was jazz with a lot of heavy drumming and "wah-wah" talking trumpets and trombones. But the music of Duke Ellington could not stay within any one style. His orchestra changed and developed from year to year, but Ellington kept one thought in front of his band. That thought is expressed in the words of an Ellington song: "It Don't Mean a Thing If It Ain't Got That Swing." And whatever the Duke has played in all the years since 1920, it has been a rare moment when his orchestra did not swing.

During the early years Duke was mostly concerned with the life of the American Negro. This concern came out not only in the blues and jazz he played but in the songs he wrote. Ellington drew on his Negro culture to write songs like "Creole Love Call," "Black and Tan Fantasy," "Jubilee Stomp," "Harlem Airshaft," or "Take the A Train," which was the subway line to Harlem. After a while the Duke stopped calling his music jazz and referred to it as Negro folk music. Whatever he called it, the music still had that swing.

Duke Ellington became a living legend as his talent grew and his fame spread around the world. He wrote songs in darkened overnight buses, sweaty railroad trains, and noisy hotel rooms. His imagination went far beyond the limits of Negro folk music or American life. Ellington became a major musical figure in American life, giving inspiration to classical composers as well as other jazzmen. He has written pieces based on the plays of William Shakespeare, on a novel by John Steinbeck, and on Negro themes. He has written music for dances, concerts, movies, festivals, churches, and television. The Duke's talent could not be locked in a small box with a neat label on it. He realized this and began referring to his work as music – not jazz, not Negro folk music, not American music – just music. Whatever you call it, the work of Duke Ellington may very well be the most accurate musical mirror any man has ever held up for modern people.

Even though Ellington's music is rooted deep in the life of the American Negro, it has found understanding listeners in Europe, Asia, and wherever people listen to good music. One of the great qualities of Ellington's work is this ability to touch so many different kinds of people. He has written a church Mass, and the beauty of the music is that it can be enjoyed by those who have never even entered a church. The unemployed Negro in Los Angeles can hear something in the Duke's music that is for him, but so can a college professor or a real English duke.

"It is an American band because it is a democratic band," the Duke once said. "Each man is an individual with a personality and a voice." The list of talented jazzmen that have helped make the Ellington orchestra swing for so many years is very much a part of the story. It is not possible to talk about the music of Duke Ellington without also talking about the music of Bubber Miley, Cootie Williams, Johnny Hodges, Harry Carney, Juan Tizol, and Ray Nance, just to name a few.

The history of Duke Ellington's orchestra is a long one, and it is filled with many contradictions. Welcomed and honored in European palaces, the musicians were refused hotel rooms in the South. The story is a familiar one to American Negroes. Throughout his career the Duke has always maintained an unusually cool outlook. If members of the band miss an opening number or if somebody hits a sour note, the Duke takes it in stride and generally smiles. He is almost never seen in a state of anger. There are few things that can upset the normally cool Duke.

In 1950 Duke Ellington became the first Negro to be an honored guest at the National Press Club in his home town of Washington, D. C. The Duke went to talk with the newspapermen after presenting one of his original compositions to the President of the

United States, Harry S. Truman, in a White House ceremony. The son of a onetime White House butler was supposed to present his manuscript and be out in ten minutes. Greeting the President, the ever-cool Ellington said, "How do you do, Mr. President. You know, I've come here in behalf of the kids on the corner who couldn't get into a place like this." The ten minutes stretched out to almost a half hour as the President sat and, with obvious enjoyment, talked to the Duke.

Even a President like Truman, whose White House decisions did much to shape the world we now live in, may be remembered by fewer people than Duke Ellington. It is most often through its creative artists that a nation is remembered. Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington stands as one of the most creative and artistic musicians ever produced in America. His name and his work will live for many years.

GOODBYE TO MY FATHER

by **JOHN DURHAM**

From the plane's window I can look down on the Grand Canyon. I can see the rocks millions of years old – billions, maybe. I can see time in layers, the oldest time on the bottom of the canyon, the newer time toward the top.

I think a lot about time because I am going home to say goodbye to my father. He is dying. He is an old man and he is dying. I think about the time when I was a boy and he was a strong, young man. I think about the time before I was born, when he was a boy.

It was a different world, then, back in those days. In little country towns – like the one where my father grew up – there was no telegraph and no railroad. You went everywhere you went on foot, or on horseback, or in a wagon or buggy. There were no planes. There were no cars, no radio, no TV. Most of the machines we now use every day had not been invented. That time was not very different from the time of the ancient Egyptians or the ancient Greeks. People farmed pretty much the same way. Their lives, at home, were not much different from the lives of ancient peoples. People worked in the fields, during the day. At night they ate supper and read a little – by lamplight – and went to bed. Sometimes they sang to a guitar. If they had money, they played a piano or a foot-pumped organ. My father's family didn't have money.

On Saturday they went into town to buy flour and nails and cloth for dresses and shirts. Most of their food they raised themselves. They were simple people. They ate simple food and wore rough clothes.

On Saturday nights they maybe had a dance. A fiddle player and a caller made up the orchestra. They danced square dances and hoedowns. The men sneaked outside for a slug of white lightning – whiskey made in home stills. And on Sunday everybody went to church. They sang hymns like "The Old Rugged Cross" and "Nearer My God to Thee." Then they went home to Sunday dinner, fried chicken and gravy and potatoes and black-eyed peas, maybe. Sometimes they had corn on the cob or pork chops or country sausage, or baked guinea hen.

Sometimes they didn't have much to eat at all. My father used to tell me about one winter he had nothing but corn meal grits and turnips to eat. All winter long, he and his family ate those turnips and those grits, with maybe a little hog lard to make them taste better.

My father lost a foot when he was just a boy, eight or nine years old. He went around on crutches until he was a grown man, almost. Then he wore a wooden leg.

His father – my grandfather – died when my father was fourteen. And my father took over the farm. He was a boy on crutches and he ran a 400-acre farm. He worked hard, and he saw to it that his two brothers and his sister worked hard. He had a good farm when he was twenty-five. He had money in the bank. He was a school-board member. He was a bachelor until he was thirty. He bought the first Model-T Ford in the county. And he was something of a heller. He gave many a girl a ride in that

Model-T. He drank many a pint of white lightning. But he kept working the farm and he made money.

He married my mother when he was thirty years old. She was nineteen, daughter of a widower. They got married and had two daughters. Two boys and another girl came later. They had two cars and my father bought the first tractor in the county. He bought and leased more land. He was a big man in the county. He was a steady man and a good man, though he had a quick temper. He was respected and well-off.

Then bad times came. Wheat prices dropped away almost to nothing in 1923. My father lost his farm. He tried driving a tractor on construction work. Then he went into the cafe business. He ran cheap little cafes that sold country cooking like his mother's cooking back on the farm: Irish stew; green beans and bacon; red beans and salt pork; chicken-fried steak; chili.

He wasn't a good businessman. He would start a cafe. It would go well for a while. Then business would go bad, and he would close up. He would go to work cooking in someone else's cheap cafe. Until he was almost 70 year old he had cafes or cooked in them. I will always remember the good taste of his Irish stew and his lemon pie. I will always remember him limping around greasy kitchens in his apron, stirring and tasting.

He was a good man. He joked with the waitresses and the customers. He loved his children, three girls and two boys. We didn't see much of him. He worked long hours. When he came home he maybe read the paper; then he fell into bed and slept until five. He had to get up early to do the breakfast cooking, and start the pies, and get the lunch going. He lost jobs and sometimes he didn't have work. Times were bad when I was a young boy. One winter we ate mostly cornmeal mush and red beans. I didn't have shoes to wear to school. Times were bad. But my father stayed with us and he loved us.

Things got better during World War II, and after. My mother and father worked and they paid down on a little house. They live there now.

My father is dying because blood can't get to the brain cells. The arteries are clogged up and hard. He gets dizzy and falls. He can't eat much. My mother has to be with him all the time. His children pay for medicine and other things he needs. We help with money. But my mother takes care of him every day, every night. She is an old woman now, but she won't let us put him in a hospital. My father is a proud man. My mother knows he doesn't want strangers taking care of him.

I live in California and my parents live in Texas. I am going home to say goodbye to my father. Soon almost no blood will get through to his brain. Soon he will stop breathing. I am going home to say goodbye.

I look down at the Grand Canyon and I think about time. I think about my father's time and my own. Not long from now, ten years, twenty, thirty, I, too, will say goodbye to my three sons. I hope that they will feel the way I do about my father. He is a good man. In his small way he helped build this country. He and my mother raised children who work hard and try to make good people of their children. Those children will have children of their own. And they will die and the children will die.

I think about these things as my plane flies over the Grand Canyon and I look down at the layers of time. I am sad to think that my father is dying. I dread saying goodbye to him. But I will go on, and my sons will. And their sons and daughters will. One man dies, but mankind goes on. We keep going on. . . .

WORDS—WORDS—WORDS

by JANE SPRAGUE

I just can't figure out this old English language. At school those teachers spout out about a million words at a time. They think they are making everything clear. But they just confuse me all the more.

Take, for instance, the old word *continental*. They talk about the Continental Divide in geography, the Continental Congress in history, and the Continental Airlines on TV. Then my math teacher prances into class one day and says he's got a Lincoln Continental. Do you dig that?

Or they send you out to get something. "Bring me a roll of tape," they say. You think they mean sticky tape, but you find out there's masking tape, magnetic tape, adhesive tape, cloth tape, Scotch tape, and – for fixing your mistakes in typing – correction tape. It makes you want to tape up that dictionary sometimes.

Those textbooks are enough to drive you crazy, too. When they mean they had soldiers around the Roman Empire to guard it, does the textbook *say* that? No, it says they placed legions on the borders for defense. How about that?

If they want to say somebody didn't like something, the textbooks say, "He was deeply disturbed." Does that sound very mad, I ask you?

And when they want you to fill out those registration cards, dig the words they use then: "Note your residence . . . occupation . . . references . . ." Why don't they say, "Put down where you live, what kind of work do you do, and who do you know who trusts you?"

I just don't dig it. If words are supposed to make things easier to understand, how come people keep using words that only make it harder?

I mean most anybody can dig what *I* put out. Like where do you make your bread? I make mine at home. I have a neat, white pad, with a lot of cats hanging around. We've got cool cats, tiger cats, cat gut, and catsup. And you can be cool, lose your cool, drive a cool bike, keep cool, and cool it.

When I say make the scene, man, I mean go where all the cats are and start doing whatever it is they're doing.

When I mean "shake hands," I say, "Give me some skin, man." And when I mean relax, I say, "Let your hair hang down, baby."

When somebody bothers me and I want him to go away, I say, "Quit buggin' me, man. Flake off."

You see, when I talk, all the cats and chicks dig it right away, because I speak a cool lingo for swingin' cats. I talk a *simple* language anyone can dig.

TALK WITH A MODEL GIRL

by **JOHN DURHAM**

The following pages contain an interview between a professor and a model. The professor is Dr. John Durham of the English Department at California State College at Los Angeles. The girl is Conchita Dowling. Miss Dowling won the Miss Pasadena Contest two years ago.

Conchita is 21 years old. She is a tall, strikingly pretty girl, with very dark hair, dark eyes and rather pale skin. Two years ago she was a student in one of Dr. Durham's literature classes. Now she combines a full-time modeling career with a full-time career as a student. She is a junior at State.

DURHAM: When did you begin your modeling career?

DOWLING: About two years ago. I never took it really seriously. I went with my girl friend to get my hair done, for free, at this beauty parlor in Sierra Madre. This man was putting on a show for a nationally known cosmetics company, and he needed two models that looked somewhat alike to experiment with their hair.

But before you could do that, you had to go down to a clinic, the company's clinic, where they condition your hair and they make sure the color is even. If I said the name of the company, you'd recognize it. They have to make sure the color of your hair is even. They have to say, "Well, this girl has good hair."

So we went down there, and the lady who runs the clinic is in charge of the Western Division of models for this company. She asked me, "Would you like to model for us?" And I said, "Well, I don't know." I didn't know that much about it. And I said, "Oh, okay." So I did that show at a big hotel, down near the airport.

DURHAM: What kind of modeling did you do?

DOWLING: It was a training film. There was a convention. All of these executives – the president and everyone from the company – came, and they had a big meeting for the drugstore division of the company. I made a training movie. There was only one girl for every color of hair.

You sat up on the stage, and they had the cameras there. They paid me ninety dollars for an hour.

DURHAM: Ninety dollars an hour?

DOWLING: Yes. Oh, they're wonderful people. They'd send you presents. And they let you into the storeroom, and you'd get all the makeup you want. So I got about two hundred dollars worth of makeup. I mean *real* good makeup.

DURHAM: So you made almost three hundred dollars off that one job, including the makeup.

DOWLING: After that, I thought, goodness. Then they took us out to dinner that night, all of us models, up at the very top of the hotel, and we got these silver plates and they brought – they had flaming food, crepes suzette, and everything.

DURHAM: What have you been doing since?

DOWLING: Then I – through the grace of God – met this woman. She's famous all over the world. You'd know *her* name, too. This was for the Miss Pasadena Contest.

That was what got me started. They had 70 girls there. And through this training film job I got interviews with the man who runs the Miss California Pageant. He's – he runs the beauty pageant, and they had this Miss Pasadena Contest. I won.

Then the lady who let them use her studio asked me if I'd be interested in working for her, as a model. I went and I had an interview with her – what a wonderful person! She was the most wonderful person. Her whole idea of this charm course, this modeling course – it's sort of like a franchise given to department stores. She has training movies and slides – it's even down in Latin America.

It's the most fabulous system because it tunes in on young girls on the glamour level. It's a real inside beauty course, not only outside.

Our motto at the school is "We make model girls, not girl models."

DURHAM: Just what do you do?

DOWLING: We start out with the very basis, with posture. We work on speech. We work on self-confidence. We work on walking, and every single lesson that we have, we tell little stories about the way you carry yourself, what you think of yourself.

DURHAM: How should a girl carry herself?

DOWLING: Well, it's like wearing a dress. If you're wearing a fifty-dollar dress, it's a beautiful dress and the dress will look as good as the way you carry it. You know what I mean?

DURHAM: I think so. You have to think of yourself as being like an expensive dress. You have an expensive self. Right?

DOWLING: Yes. You have the biggest chunk of gold that you could possibly have in yourself. You are your own biggest value.

DURHAM: Even if you're not especially pretty?

DOWLING: Well, that has nothing to do with it.

DURHAM: A girl who feels right about herself walks rather erectly, with her shoulders square and –

DOWLING: Yes! Even if she's not proud. Even if she's a mess!

DURHAM: Even if she's got a weight problem?

DOWLING: Actually, when you slump, when a tall girl tries to look short, it actually detracts from her appearance. It makes you look taller when you slump. Or a fat girl looks fatter.

DURHAM: What else do you talk about in your modeling class?

DOWLING: Self-confidence. Speech. Enunciating your words clearly. We stress saying your words clearly very much.

DURHAM: Why is that so important?

DOWLING: A girl shouldn't blur her words. It blurs her personality. Then we talk about how to sit down and how to stand and how to get in and out of cars.

DURHAM: How do you get in and out of cars? I've been doing it for years, but –

DOWLING: Oh, Dr. Durham! Well, it's very interesting. Now take sports cars. There's a very easy, proper way for a girl to get into one. Instead of stepping in with your right foot, you just go in backwards. You turn around and back in. In a regular car, where you have to step up, you keep your knees together.

DURHAM: What kind of advice would you give girls about clothes?

DOWLING: My personal opinion on clothes is this: rather than have ten things, ten different outfits, that are all cheap and don't really do much for you, have one really good outfit. Instead of spending thirty-six dollars on three cheap dresses, you buy one good dress.

A dress like that will last you and last you. And there's something about the way you feel in a dress. If you feel actually fabulous in a dress, get it, even if it's not in your style. People say, well, you're fat, don't wear two-piece outfits. You're tall, wear horizontal stripes. I don't agree. You should feel excited about what you wear.

DURHAM: Don't you think simple clothes are better, even if the colors are bright? Simple lines, I mean.

DOWLING: Well, simple clothes are elegant. Yes. Anybody can get away with wearing simple clothes.

DURHAM: A little simple suit of one color is better over a long period of time?

DOWLING: If you like ordinary, drab things.

DURHAM AND DOWLING: (Laughter)

DURHAM: You're given a choice between a black suit and a wild plaid. You'd choose the wild plaid?

DOWLING: Sure, because that's my personality. I'm not wild, but –

DURHAM: A girl should choose what fits her personality?

DOWLING: Yes! If a girl feels loud and shy in a plaid, then she shouldn't wear it.

DURHAM: How do you feel about miniskirts?

DOWLING: I like miniskirts. Take that picture of Jackie Kennedy in a miniskirt. She looked great.

DURHAM: I thought so.

DOWLING: If you feel embarrassed in any style, then it's not for you. I don't think Jackie Kennedy was embarrassed. If you can walk down the street wearing a miniskirt and knee socks and a funny little sweater and an English hat and you feel great, then that's for you.

DURHAM: What if you feel great in a miniskirt and the school you go to doesn't think you look great?

DOWLING: You wear what the school wants you to wear to school. And you wear *your* clothes out on dates. Because school isn't a stage for extreme fashions.

DURHAM: You have on a simple sweater and a plain skirt and suede shoes.

DOWLING: I think your clothes for school should be basic and simple. Something you can wear ten times and people won't say, "There she is in her wild outfit."

DURHAM AND DOWLING: (Laughter)

DURHAM: Didn't you tell me once you were part Moorish?

DOWLING: My mother's father is from the north of Spain, a Basque. My mother has a lot of Arabian blood. She was born in Mexico. She's a very – she's Spanish and English.

DURHAM: Did anyone ever tell you that if you're born in southern Europe you have one chance out of nine of having Negro blood? I mean, even if you think you're absolutely white.

DOWLING: I could have a one in two chance, and it wouldn't bother me. Or one in one. I don't care. I'm me. I'm what I am.

DURHAM: And very nice, too. Let's get back to modeling. Where do you think you'll go from here?

DOWLING: Oh, I don't care about modeling. I want to be a designer. A dress designer. I make all my own clothes.

DURHAM: Tell me how you go about designing and making a dress.

DOWLING: First, I imagine the dress. I have all these fantastic ideas. I think of myself in the dress. I think of me, floating down the steps, in this beautiful creation. I go out and I buy this material –

DURHAM: What steps are you floating down, if I may ask?

DOWLING: Well, we don't have any steps in our house.

DURHAM AND DOWLING: (Laughter)

DURHAM: So you're floating down imaginary steps. And what next?

DOWLING: I buy the material, and I make the dress. For about $5.98 I have a hundred-dollar gown.

I don't use patterns. But a girl could take a basic pattern and change it any way she liked. She could cut a square neck or a round neck. You could put sleeves in. You could do anything.

I decorated my own bedroom, too. I have a canopy bed, all white. The walls are pale pink and I have scalloped curtains. And a red velvet quilt.

DURHAM: That sounds expensive.

DOWLING: No! I picked up all these Salvation Army things. You wouldn't believe it, the furniture you –

DURHAM: How much did your room cost you?

DOWLING: I didn't buy anything, except the paint. It was all old furniture people gave me. Well, and I bought the curtains. Twelve dollars each. But I made the drapes. I went to this bargain basement, and I got this beautiful dress material and I made the drapes.

DURHAM: I want to hear more about the ideas you teach in your modeling school. What's this concept of inner beauty?

DOWLING: A woman brings out the things that make her beautiful from the inside. Most girls have sincerity and honesty, but they're afraid to be themselves. They have to follow the fads. If everyone's chopping her hair off like a boy's, women all do it. A feminine, lovely girl should just be herself. If she doesn't like to smoke, she shouldn't smoke because everyone else does. And the same for drinking. I don't drink at all. And I have more fun –

DURHAM: You seem so happy most of the time that you're about two drinks ahead of everyone else when you're cold sober.

DOWLING: Right! Oh, I like to go to a wedding and have a sip of champagne – but I don't like the taste of liquor. So why force it? Most girls do. They force conventions on themselves, like smoking and drinking and bad language and white lipstick, because everybody wears it. And they look sick! They tease their hair out like a bush, and they think they look good. Girls like that are kidding themselves. Secretly, down inside, they may be beautiful girls.

DURHAM: Why do they go in for these extreme styles?

DOWLING: They want to be like everybody else. They don't have self-confidence.

DURHAM: How do you get self-confidence?

DOWLING: By learning about yourself. By learning that you really *are* lovely. In our society, as soon as a girl is about seven, she'll go to school, and the teacher will say, "Don't do that!" And she'll shrug her neck up, like this. Pretty soon you've got about four hundred girls walking around like this, with short necks.

DURHAM AND DOWLING: (Laughter)

DURHAM: Because they're afraid of what people think?

DOWLING: Yes. Parents label their kids. And teachers do. The kids believe in the labels. Sure they do. This is the dumb one, and this is the smart one.

DURHAM: Can't you escape labels?

DOWLING: Yes, by being yourself. You can't escape being labeled. But you don't have to give in to the labels. Just being yourself – a girl has to learn this – is something of value and something of worth.

DURHAM: I've tried to teach that for a long time.

DOWLING: We teach it with results.

DURHAM: And so do I. There's an example right here.

DOWLING: You mean me?

DURHAM: I certainly do.

DOWLING: Well, thank you, Dr. Durham.

DURHAM: And thank you, Miss Dowling. It's been a pleasure talking to you.

NIGHT CHASE

by MORRIE GREENBERG

It started out as a routine motor patrol for motorcycle policeman Bobby K. Wheelis. It did not end that way. This *true* story tells what happened to Officer Wheelis the night of September 7, 1964. Because of this policeman's action – above and beyond his duty – he received the Medal of Valor. This is the highest award a Los Angeles police officer can receive.

Officer Bobby K. Wheelis gripped the handles of his motorcycle firmly. He raced through the September night air at 60 miles an hour. Officer Wheelis was nervous, and he had a right to be. His cycle was going the *wrong* way on the Pasadena Freeway. Headlights from half a dozen oncoming cars shot toward him. It seemed like a nightmare to Officer Wheelis – a nightmare that began only fifty seconds earlier.

Less than a minute before, Officer Wheelis and his partner were on night motor patrol on the Pasadena Freeway. As they rode from Los Angeles to Pasadena at 10 p.m., the traffic was neither heavy nor light. "Just another routine motor patrol," thought Officer Wheelis. Suddenly, as the two cycles came around the sharp curve of Avenue 64, Wheelis was almost blinded by a set of headlights. They came straight at him! He swerved his cycle sharply to the right. The headlights whizzed past him so closely that he could have reached out and touched one of them. In that instant, Officer Wheelis knew what was happening. This was a wrong-way car. It was heading right into oncoming cars. The result was almost certain to be a head-on smashup. The Pasadena Freeway is Los Angeles' oldest freeway, with three narrow lanes that twist and turn. There are very few road shoulders. So death stood waiting unless . . . unless what? What could Wheelis do? He could zoom off the freeway at the next off ramp and then rip back through the regular streets to where he could head off the car. Wheelis's partner peeled off to do just that. But it would take time. Too much time – and Wheelis knew it. He made up his mind in less than a second. He slammed his cycle to a halt on the right edge of the freeway. He whirled his machine around in a quick U-turn. As he did this, he heard a car screech and skid its way around the wrong-way car. Death still waited. Wheelis gunned the cycle forward and then slowed down slightly as he banked around the sharp, blind curve of Avenue 64. The backward chase was on. There were no shoulder areas on this blind curve. If a pair of headlights came at him now, it might be the end. He came out of the curve in time to see a set of headlights bearing down on him. He swerved to the left just in time. A second set of headlights whizzed by. Then a third. Death missed him – now by a foot, now by only inches. Wheelis did not let up. He stayed on the cycle as it raced down the narrow freeway.

On the straightaway at last, Wheelis raced to 60 miles an hour. A few seconds later he caught sight of something 200 yards ahead. Red taillights! The runaway car! The cycle dodged in – then out – of the three lanes, avoiding first one pair of headlights and then another. If he had time to count, he would have counted fourteen cars that screeched past him in the three-quarters of a mile he had already gone. By now the runaway car had slowed to about 20 miles an hour. Wheelis moved up, almost even with the runaway car. As his cycle pulled alongside, Wheelis saw that the driver of the car was drunk. The policeman cut in front of the car and blinked the cycle's rear red lights rapidly. The car slowed down somewhat, but kept on rolling. The drunk driver was ignoring the signal to stop!

Wheelis thought, "Gone this far – got to try one more trick." He pulled some 100 feet ahead of the car and then slammed his cycle to a stop squarely in the path of the slow-moving car. The policeman jumped off his cycle, stepped aside, and ran back in the direction of the oncoming car. The drunk driver had a choice now – smash into the cycle or slow down. The car slowed to about 5 miles an hour. This was all the opening Wheelis needed. As the car rolled by him, he opened the driver's side of the car and jumped in. His foot found the brake and pressed down.

The car stopped behind the cycle as the drunk driver collapsed in a heap. Wheelis reached toward the ignition, pulled out the keys, and breathed a deep sigh of genuine relief. The chase could not have lasted much more than a minute. His speed ranged between 50 and 60 miles an hour most of the time, and he covered a shade less than a mile. But it had seemed like a nightmare that was never going to end. Now it was all over – and he was still alive. He breathed another deep sigh. "It will be a while before I top this one," he thought.

OPEN COUNTRY

by JOHN DURHAM

1. SHOOTING A CROW

It was cold that winter in North Texas, bitter cold. Fine, hard snow fell for three days. I was fourteen then, a skinny boy with big feet and big ears. I had my first gun, a .22 Remington rifle, bolt action. It was beautiful to me, that gun, and it gave me a sense of power. I could aim it and pull the trigger and I could smash things.

I could smash a Coke bottle, or a small rock. I could smash a tin can. Or I could burst the living heart of a rabbit. I knew, too, that I could aim the gun at a human being – a man, or a boy, or a girl – and pull the trigger and end a life forever.

It was cold that winter, and snow was deep on the ground. That Saturday, soon after Christmas, I walked alone out into the open country. That part of Texas is rolling plains. Most of it is covered with small trees called mesquites. In summer, mesquites look like California pepper trees, though in winter they are bare. You walk out into the open country and there are the mesquites. Here and there, up out of the plains, rises a butte, a flat-topped hill. It is a hard country, and that winter it was harder because the north wind was fierce and the snow was deep.

I walked far out into the country, three miles, or four. I wore two pairs of jeans, heavy boots, a sweater, a jacket, and gloves. My head was bare. My ears and nose were cold, numb with the chill of the north wind.

I was hunting rabbits, looking for their tracks in the snow. But they were hidden deep, eating the dry grass from last summer. Or they were sleeping under the snow. Anyway, I saw no rabbits, and almost no rabbit tracks.

But overhead, up against the grey sky, a flock of crows circled. They were very black against the pale grey of the low clouds. They circled over me, rather high – a hundred feet, I guess. But one crow, their leader, kept flying down lower. He would swoop down toward me and cry out: "Caw, caw, caw!" It was his warning. He was letting the other crows know that there was danger. Crows – like other animals – know that a man means danger.

And they are right. A man is a danger to all the animals, including other men.

I trudged through the deep snow, my face freezing, and the lead crow kept swooping down at me, very low, sometimes. There were no rabbits to kill. And I had that gun. I knew what the crow was saying. He was saying, Danger! Danger! Keep away! And somehow I hated him. His caw bit into my heart.

I had the gun, and it was cold, freezing. My ears hurt, and my nose, and my cheeks. And that crow kept swooping at me. I knew I could not hit him. Hitting a bird on the wing with a rifle is very hard, even for an expert. And I was a boy with his first gun.

I think I did not even want to hit the lead crow. But I raised the gun and aimed. I led him – fired where I thought he would be when the bullet got there. I fired and he stopped, just for an instant, in mid-air. Then, without a sound, he tumbled down out of the sky. He fell, tumbling, black and shining against the flat, grey clouds.

He fell into the snow on his side. He fought his way to his feet. And he tried to fly, but he could not. One wing was shattered by my bullet. He lay in the snow, blue-black and beautiful. He watched me as I walked through the heavy snow toward him. He made no sound. He simply watched me with those golden eyes. He watched me, and I walked up and stood over him.

A crow is a large bird. It looks bigger up close than from a distance. And this was the leader of his troupe. This was the king. He was a big bird, blue-black, shimmering with colors. And his eyes were like precious stones. His blood, there against the white snow, was royal red.

We looked at each other for what seemed like a long time, the king-crow and the boy with the gun. We looked into each other's eyes. Overhead, against the flat, grey clouds, his troupe circled, cawing. They circled and cawed, black against the grey.

I looked into the crow's eyes and I knew he hated me. I was man, the killer. I was death. And he hated me.

I still do not know why I did the thing. I knew he hated me. And I lifted the rifle and aimed it very carefully. And I shattered his royal head with a second bullet. The golden eyes were gone, a mass of blood and bone and matter. One more king was dead.

I turned then and walked away, weeping. I do not know, even now, why I cried. It was only one crow and the world is full of crows. There are millions of them, and billions of other birds. They say that in one acre of ground there are billions of living creatures, insects and birds and rabbits and moles. On the whole earth there are billions upon billions of living creatures. I was a boy then, but I knew those things.

I walked across the fields, through the deep snow. I walked through the mesquite, back into the town, back to my house. I went into my room and took all the shells out of the .22. They shone in my hand, bright copper and bright lead. They were beautiful. I looked at them and put them in a dresser drawer. I took the gun and put it in my closet, high up, on a shelf. I never touched it again, not that winter, not the next summer. I never touched the gun again.

2. THE KING SNAKE

Spring always comes. Every year — after the snows and the cold winds — spring comes back like a new miracle. That year in April the pale leaves of the mesquites were like yellow spurts of flame across the countryside. And for people who are young, spring sometimes brings love.

The year I was fourteen, spring brought Amy Pettibone. She had been there all the time, in my English class. I just didn't see her until April.

It was in English class and the sun shone bright through the window. The teacher, Mrs. Grimm, was reading a poem:

> Come with me, and in the fires of spring
> Your winter garments of repentance fling;
> The bird of time has but a little way to flutter. . . .

I didn't care about the bird of time. What I cared about was the way the sun was shining on Amy Pettibone's hair. I cared about the way Amy's hands folded themselves on her desk. Her hands were *neat*. They were pretty. They were the way hands ought to be. In fact, everything about Amy Pettibone was the way things ought to be. All of a sudden, I saw that. I looked at her and I wondered why I hadn't seen it before. Amy Pettibone. It was a name to make my heart fly, like the bird of time. Amy Pettibone.

I had never been in love before. I thought I had gone a little bit crazy. No, that's not right. I didn't *think*. I *felt*. And what I felt about was Amy Pettibone. I sang songs to her, walking to school.

I sang sad songs, like "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes." I thought about how sad losing Amy Pettibone would be. I sang happy songs, like "Walking My Baby Back Home." I made up songs about Amy Pettibone.

All the time, day and night, Amy Pettibone was on my mind. My mother and father just looked at me and shook their heads. They thought it was puppy love. They said so. "It's puppy love," they said. Every boy and girl knows that "puppy love" is just as real as any other love. It's realer, in fact. You love – when you're fourteen – the way you'll never love again.

But love is sad. It's sad if you're a skinny boy with big feet and big ears and what they call a "complexion problem." I loved Amy Pettibone. But I knew she couldn't love me. Who could love a guy too big on both ends and too thin in the middle? A guy with a bad complexion. Who could love a guy like me? I knew that. Especially a dream of a girl like Amy Pettibone. Amy was flowers in brick-lined beds. Amy was cool water from a deep well. Amy was a star in the dusky evening sky. Amy had perfect hair and skin and arms and feet and everything. How could she love me? She couldn't. I knew that.

But I dreamed. Nobody could stop me from dreaming. I walked out into the country and I dreamed about Amy. I felt how it would be to touch her hand. I felt how it would be to say, "I love you, Amy Pettibone." I felt how it would be to say, "I would do anything for you, my angel." I felt how it would be – I dared to think it – if I kissed Amy Pettibone.

I walked in the country. The new leaves on the mesquites were like pale yellow flames. The cactus flowers were golden and cherry red. The black-eyed Susans were yellow with black centers. Young quail peeped in the thick new weeds. New calves grazed in the pastures, near their mothers. The sky was perfect, high blue, touched here and there with rounded, perfect clouds. The air was perfect, warm enough and yet cool enough. I walked through this burst of new life and dreamed about Amy Pettibone.

I don't know what day I found the king snake. Or what day the king snake found me. I was sitting on a rock under a mesquite, listening to a mocking bird, but thinking about Amy. And this snake came through the new, tender grass.

Have you seen a king snake? He has a pattern of chocolate brown and pale brown and golden yellow on his back. His belly is the color of rich, thick cream. His eyes are golden yellow. Or that's the way I remember my king snake, anyway. He was beautiful. He came through the new grass that was like little spurts of green flame. He came toward me.

I got up and on my big feet, I gangled over, and I just picked him up. He didn't seem to mind. He coiled himself around my arm, and his tongue flicked out again and again. But he didn't seem to mind. He seemed to like me, in fact. I felt he liked me.

I didn't know why, but that king snake seemed to be all the parts of springtime put together. He had shed his old skin, and he was new and shiny. He seemed like the whole springtime. He seemed like the new leaves and the new grass and the cactus flowers and the black-eyed Susans, all wrapped up in one perfect animal. And I loved him.

I didn't love him the way I loved Amy Pettibone. But I loved him. So I carried him back toward town with me. He coiled around my arm and shoulder in a friendly way, and together we walked back home.

Now Amy Pettibone lived out on the edge of town in a little white wooden house. It had a yard with a few flowers and some ragged grass and one weeping willow tree. I came by with my new king snake. And who was sitting under the weeping willow tree on an old peach crate but Amy Pettibone. She was sitting there brushing her long hair.

"Hey," she said, "where you going?"

"Home."

"What you got there?"

I held up my king snake. "A snake," I said. "A king snake."

"A *snake!* Oh, ugh! Ugh! Ugh! Ugh!" She set down her brush. "Bring him on over," she said. "So I can see what he looks like, up close."

"You sure he won't scare you? He's pretty big."

"Well, is he a rattlesnake?"

"I wouldn't carry a rattlesnake," I said. "A rattlesnake would bite me."

"And this snake won't bite?" Amy Pettibone said. She looked just perfect, standing there in the April sun.

"It won't hurt you," I said. "I won't let it."

So I walked over under the weeping willow tree. And Amy Pettibone – her hands held up just in case – stared and stared at the king snake. Her face at first said, "Ugh! Awful!" Then her eyes softened and her mouth rounded.

"My gosh," she said. "I wouldn't want you to tell any of my girl friends this." She pointed her finger at the snake. "But," she said.

"But what?"

"It's beautiful. I never in this world thought I'd say that about a snake. Snakes! Ugh!"

"Yeah," I said. "It is kind of pretty."

"What're you gonna do with it?" Amy Pettibone said.

"Oh, I don't know. Keep it in a cage at my house. I'll have to build the cage."

"Oh," she said, "oh, no. You can't do that. No."

"Why not?"

"Because it has to be out in the country," she said. "It has to find a lady snake. Doesn't it?"

"I didn't think about that. But I guess you're right."

"Sure I am. Well, listen," she said, "did you do that stupid old English assignment? About the short story?"

"Not yet," I said. "I've been out looking for things. Out in the country."

Amy sighed. "Yeah," she said. "It's just a great day. But I got to go in the house and do that stupid assignment."

"Yeah," I said. "I better get home and maybe do it, too."

Amy took one step toward me and stuck out one perfect finger. She touched the king snake, just barely, on the head. On a spot of gold. "He's so *pretty*," she said.

I never did touch Amy Pettibone's hand. I never did kiss her. I never did tell her, "Amy Pettibone, I love you." Next year I fell in love with another girl. I forget her name.

But I never have forgotten Amy Pettibone. Or the king snake. I think about springtime – when it comes back every year – and Amy and the king snake are mixed up with it. I think I still love them both, a little. I think I always will.

LAST SONG
FOR A SHEPHERD

by JOHN DURHAM

When Lobo came to us he looked like one of those fur muffs that Russian girls wear, along with the fur coats. *His* fur was black, and a tan that was almost gold. He was round and fuzzy, with flesh and eyes tender as new grass. We loved him on sight.

There were times, later, when I hated him. He grew into a lank young hound who fit his name. (Lobo, in Spanish, means wolf.) How can a grown man hate a six-months-old pup? Let me tell you. A grown-up man has to work for his money. I happen to work hard for mine. And Lobo, in four or five months' time, chewed up over $200 worth of stuff. He wasn't particular. He destroyed a forty-dollar leather briefcase someone had given me. (I bought a plastic thing to replace it.) He broke up a total of six bags of fertilizer. Then there was the end of the couch eaten away, which meant re-covering the whole thing. There was a new two-by-four, gnawed to splinters. And more.

He dug, too. The beds of vegetables in the back yard were dug up several times. Tomato plants were de-rooted, as if by a giant gopher. The worst digging crime, though, was the apricot tree. I have a love for trees, and apricots are my favorites. The little trees are shapely. The leaves are tender and of a lovely green, and the fruit hangs like tiny suns along the branches. Lobo took care of that, leaves, branches, tiny suns, and all. He dug it up, as they say, root and branch. He was hell on wheels, there for several months.

But I finally trained him, using a book written by one of Disney's trainers. Lobo learned it all quickly, though he didn't want to. He learned to heel and to sit and to lie down, on command. I could shout "come," and he would come bounding to me, from wherever he was. He was gentle with everyone in the family – my wife, the three boys, the Siamese cat, and the three kittens.

The Siamese grew up with Lobo. She slept against his chest, as the kittens slept later. She and Lobo went on walks with us, up the hilly street and into the wooded hills. The cat stalked him all the way, running ahead in that odd, flat run that Siamese have, then lying in wait behind some big weed or bush. Lobo played the game. He pretended shocked surprise when she leaped out in attack.

Three or four nights a week, the dog and I went for walks up into the hills. I'd say to him, "Walk, Lobo?" He would bark, first, then moan with ecstasy, leaping around the family room and down the hall, nudging at the door with his nose. He loved the hills. Sometimes, when we were careless about doors and gates, he would be gone. Hours later, he came back exhausted but happy, and lay at our feet with that look people have when they've done something wrong that was a hell of a lot of fun.

I remember him best floating down the green hills, on our daylight rambles. He ran like a boy's dream of a dog, powerful and graceful. He ranged ahead, along the dry creekbed, among the sycamores, returning now and then to check with me. He was like one of the children, there toward the last, we loved him so.

We'll never be sure how it happened. I was careless, to begin with. I left him in the garage, his choke collar hooked to a four-foot metal leash. We had to chain him when we left because there was a rabbit in the garage, in his hutch. You can't train a shepherd not to kill rabbits, not easily. The taste of that gentle blood is bred into shepherds, from the old ages, when their far-distant parents were wolves in the forests of Germany and Poland. So we had to chain him, or so we thought.

I knew a man should never leave a dog on a choke collar, but I did. And I left the bolt on the garage door open, instead of sliding it shut. I'll regret my carelessness and haste, to some degree, as long as I live. When a man accepts a dog, he accepts responsibility for the dog's safety, just as a German shepherd accepts responsibility for the safety of the man and his family. Lobo lived up to his responsibility. He was ready to attack any intruder. And I failed him.

When I came home, I saw the chain first, angling from the spot where it was fastened to a post in the garage. It angled tautly up over the fence that runs out from the garage wall. I knew what I would see when I leaned over the fence.

He died slowly. He had bloodied his paws and the fence and the stucco wall of the garage, trying to get back over the fence.

He was powerful, and it took him a long time to die. A long time. He almost made it. There are claw marks still, on the top of the boards, on the outside, where, in his last panic and his last frantic attempt to keep air in his lungs, he had clawed at the wood. I keep thinking about that.

I buried him up in the hills, on a long, green slope that runs down through a grove of oaks. It was a hill he had ranged a hundred times bounding through the new grass like a boy's dream of a dog, flowing down the flank of the hill like some black and gold liquid.

The soil there is rich and deep. I went down more than four feet, cutting through the new grass with my shovel, cutting down through the loamy earth, into the tunnels of gophers and other little beasts. The oaks have dropped their leaves on that hillside for thousands of years. Oaks have risen up there, and stood for a hundred years, and died. No one can know how many thousands of trees and animals have enriched the soil of that hillside with their leaves and their branches and their flesh and their bones.

I wept like a fool as I dug the grave. I asked myself if a man who has been through a war and seen men die, a man who is thought to be tough and cynical, should cry over the death of a dog. Maybe he shouldn't. I don't know.

I did something else sentimental, too. We had slabs of slate in the garage, left over from a new fireplace we had built. I took a sharp-edged screwdriver and gouged out these words:

My dog, whose grave this is, was like my child;
Let rains fall warm; let winds blow mild.

Then I took the slate and walked back up into the hills and laid it in the fresh earth.

My mind tells me that kind of emotion is cheap. But I have learned to follow my heart, and be damned to what my mind, and other people, say.

My dog will lie on that hillside for ten thousand years. His flesh will become the stuff of grass and oaks. He will lie there forever, as I will lie somewhere else, when my time comes. I hope I find a hillside as beautiful. I hope I don't come to lie there – wherever it is – through carelessness and haste, as Lobo did.

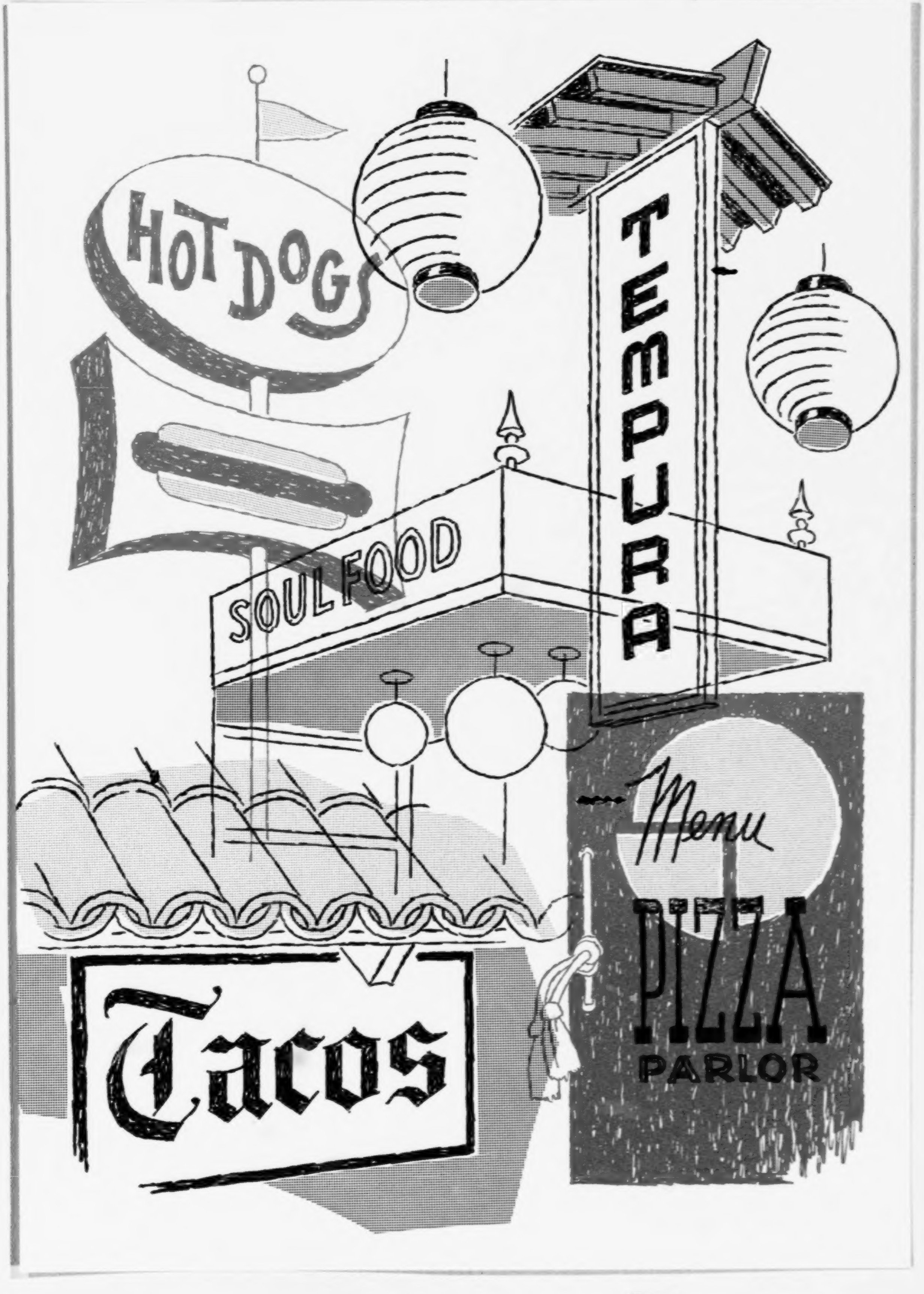
But that's not the end. Death is something a man has to face, honestly. Dogs die and men die, and they are gone from us, forever. But we go on.

I buried Lobo in the morning. That afternoon my wife – who cannot walk up that one hill yet – went with me to buy a shepherd puppy. He looks like a muff, black, with touches of golden tan. So far, within three days, he's chewed up one electric cord, a tennis shoe, and three toys. We have lived through all this before. The puppy seems like a ghost, like a rebirth.

But he'll be his own dog. He's bigger than Lobo was, at the same age. And we've given him his own name. On his papers, we've put down "Richthofen's Blue Max," naming him after The Bloody Red Baron of World War I and the medal. We call him Max. He follows me around, right at my heels, like a conscience perhaps, reminding me of my responsibilities. This time I hope to keep them better.

Death is a fact that must be accepted, and so is guilt. We all die; all of us feel guilt. But a man doesn't cave in, in the face of death. And he doesn't give up because he's sinned. He tries to start over. I have the feeling that the best time to start over is today. My heart tells me that.

FEELINGS


HOT DOGS
TEMPURA
SOUL FOOD
Menu
PIZZA
PARLOR
Tacos

AMERICA IS A BECOMING PLACE

by JANE SPRAGUE

America isn't a place that's fixed and finished.
America is a becoming place.
It isn't just a mass of wheat fields,
Mighty forests and white roads winding.

America is the city, high and sprawling,
Entwined in curving freeways
That twist over and under each other
Like a roller coaster at the beach.

America is more than hot dogs and apple pie.
America is pizza, tacos, and sweet and sour pork,
Strudel, tempura, borscht and mustard greens,
Pralines, candy apples, fudge and ice cream.

America sings more than one song.
Speaks more than one language,
Votes for more than one party,
Believes in more than one way of life.

There are problems to solve,
Plans to make, cities to build.
There are skills to learn,
Dreams to make real, lives to save.

America is happening right here.
This is it. This is how it works.
We are the ones who make it happen,
And we're the only ones who can.

America isn't old and tired,
Hardened in its ways, like an aging city.
America isn't a place that's fixed and finished.
America is a becoming place.

THREE VIEWS OF SELF

by JOHN DURHAM

MASQUERADE

Halloween is every day for me.
I wear a mask to fit my role.
Monday I'm a student; Tuesday you'll see
The athlete; Wednesday, the fool.

Thursday I am coward; Friday, king,
And Saturday, the lover singing songs
To girls I never knew; to them I bring
Scents and red rubies and golden gongs

To call me with. But all these masks
Hide someone no one ever sees,
The me inside. On Sunday I ask
That God will end the masquerade and set me free.

SECRETS

I know who I am, by God.
I'm not the guy the teacher
Asks the number of feet in a rod.
I'm not the clod the girl reaches
Past to get into her locker
Without seeing me. I'm not the jerk on the beach
Who watches the other guys rock
With great chicks to the transistor radio.

I know some things none of them know:
A pot, it doesn't just make the rod go;
The carburetor is a miracle that feeds power
Like a mother to the sweet pistons and rods;
The baited hook catches jewels, not rock cod
And sea bass; the football draws a curve
Geometry never dreamed about. My hour
Will get here. It may be a long time, years from now.
But it will come, if it comes late and comes slow.
I know who I am, by God.
And someday they will know.

THE TIGER IN HIS CAGE AND STRIPES

The tiger in his cage and stripes
Knows who he is. The horse in his field,

Head lifted toward the distant hawk,
Knows, too.
                    Why does my mirror show
A face that isn't me? How does the tiger know
What I do not?
                    The city, its brick and steel,
Its horns and hammers, it wipes
Out something in me.
                    I am more real
At the shore, with the sky and one sail
On the far, green water.
                    I want to walk
In my city
                    as free and real as the horse
Inside his fence. I want the tiger's look
In my eyes, inside my city cage.

I want the horse's strength, the tiger's rage
And the sea's calm swell.
                    I want to be
What I can be, one self, complete and free.

THE NEW BOY

by JANE SPRAGUE

His face is full of shyness.
He is dressed too neatly,
And his notebook is clean.
His hair is freshly cut,
And the cords of his neck
Are vulnerable and young.

He is unsure of his way,
Alert and cautious in his walk.
His voice is deep and soft,
Answering more questions
Than he asks.

The line of his cheek
Is boyish and innocent.
But the set of his shoulders
Is that of a man.

Here is a boy unguarded,
Open and findable without defenses.
Unsure of his enemies, he takes
All men to be his friends,
At least until they prove
To be otherwise.

Will he know that I am not
His enemy, but a friend?
Will he let me emerge from
My childish self that others
Can't forget, and see me
As myself, a girl half-way
In love with him,
Unknown New Boy?

TWO LOVE SONGS

by JOHN DURHAM

THE NEW EVE

This girl with the short hair
And the bare knees, does she know
She walks like a Cherokee, aware
Of everything, but mild and slow?

Does she know her lips curve
Like they were cut from stone?
Does she know my eyes blur
When she turns away, and I'm alone?

Does she know her perfume touches
Some part of me I didn't even know
Was there, inside? That my breath
Stops when she smiles just so?

Touching her hand would be like –
I dream it would – touching God
Back when the world was new and I
Was Adam, made of clay and green sod.

Can I tell her who we are, she and I?
The first girl and the first man?
We will name the beasts and search the sky
For the God who made us, and fulfill His plan.

TIE A NEW CORD

We met, and it was all tag ends.
You had loved and I had loved;
We both had lost. The world never mends,
We thought. The skies above
Us were filled with cold wind and dark clouds.

It was all rain and broken dates.
I was busy and you were ill.
Your mother had other fates
Picked out for you. I was nil
In your father's book. He was not proud

Of me, or of you and me together.
But something – was it the record
Where Frank Sinatra sings "Stormy Weather"? –
Made us love. We tied a new cord
I think will not break. Now the crowd

At any party is just us, you and me.
We talk to someone else maybe: a girl
Who's nice and pretty; or maybe a few
Boys who gather around you, like cats, and purr.
But the black clouds now are our clouds.

We share the sun, too. Let the world go
The way it goes. We share it, cool and slow.

YOUNG LOVE

by JANE SPRAGUE

Eyes bright.
Smile sweet.
Moonlit night.
Love complete.

Word cruel.
Voice loud.
Look cool.
Heads bowed.

Rose yellow.
Kiss implored.
Heart mellow.
Love restored.

HAIKU: EIGHT STRAIGHT PLUS SIX HIP

by JOHN DURHAM

Haiku is a Japanese form of poetry. The whole poem has seventeen syllables. Five syllables are in the first line, seven in the second, and five in the third line. There is no rhyme.

Haiku tries to give quick little pictures. These pictures may say how humans feel about winter, or death, or love. Nature is usually a part of the poems. The poem often compares a bird or a cricket or the moon to a human being.

Think about each poem carefully. Each poem is short, but it may have a lot of meaning.

Cherry seed: flowers
For twenty Aprils and fruit
For twenty summers.

One grain of rice holds
Last summer in its brown husk
And spring in its heart.

Cat and mouse: my heart
Tiptoes through the grass of love
But you flee from me.

The man sells chestnuts
In the bitter wind. Where did
My spring and summer go?

Book in a boy's hand:
We make one brick; soon we see
A city rising.

Old man, catch the leaf
Falling; all Aprils are gone.
Winter comes on fast.

Fire burn blue, burn bright.
My love sleeps in a city
Across ten mountains.

Four sparrows, three grains
Of wheat: the wise cat watches,
Loving their quarrel.

Dog trots down Vermont,
Dodging cars: student cools it
Through the high school halls.

Train in the night; train
Blowing across the fields: got
To go, man, somewhere.

Red custom car, pots
Rumbling like easy, slow guns:
Ship on a far sea.

Two stars, foggy sky,
Freeway like slow, hot thunder:
Green trees of my home.

Guitar and drums; shout
Of the three boss vocals there:
Flight of three eagles.

Miniskirt, pale red
Up above long white stockings:
Tissue paper flower.

DROPOUT'S COMPLAINT

by JANE SPRAGUE

Best papers on the board.
Mine is never there.
Best speech will be recorded.
Mine is never taped.
Best picture on display.
Mine is never shown.
Best players on the team.
My name is never listed.
Best project in Open House.
Mine is never seen.

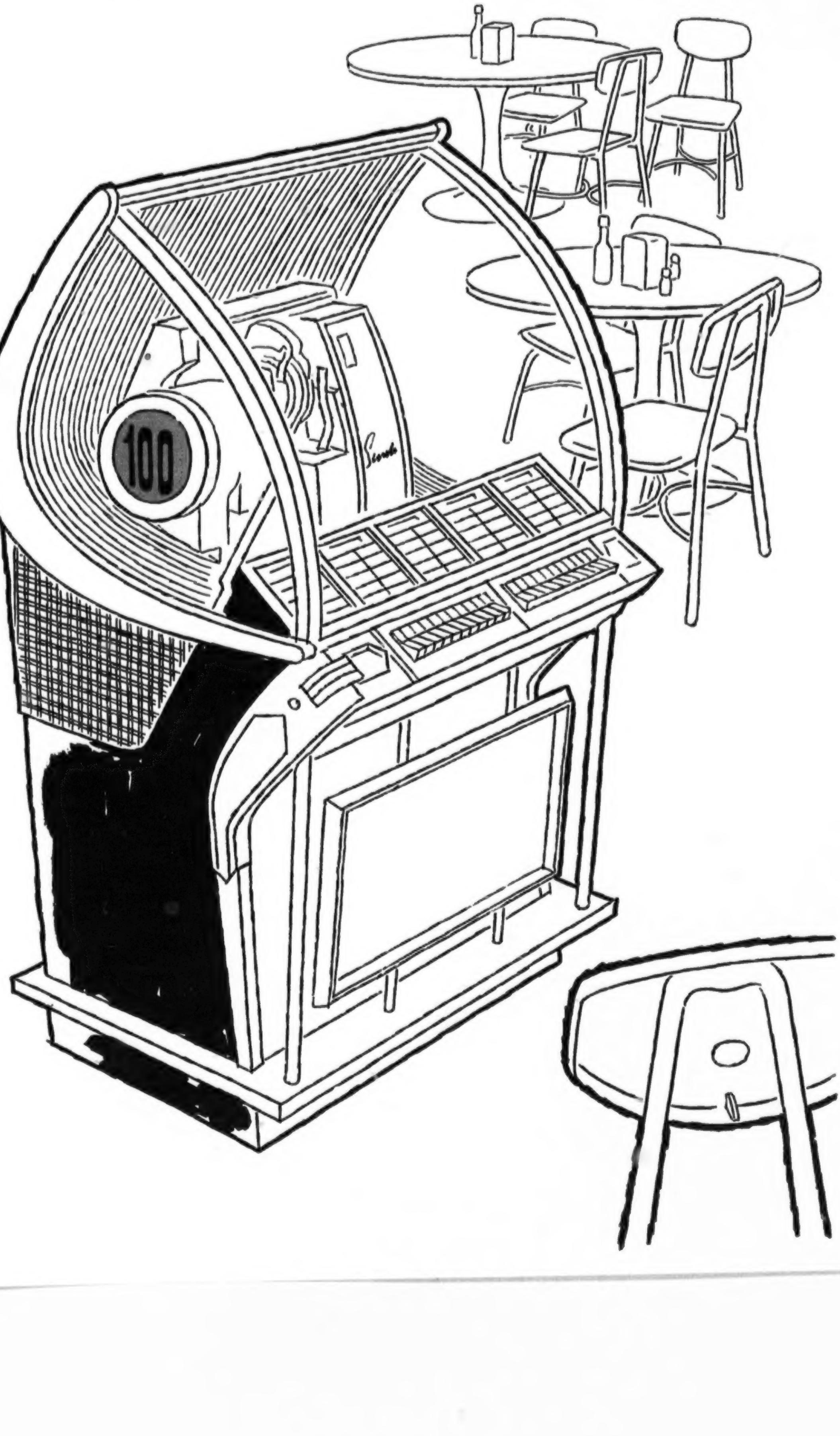
The only place my name is found
Is on the teacher's list.
The only place my face is seen
Is in the yearbook group.

I can play a twelve-string guitar.
                    Who needs it?
I can fix any car in town.
                    Who cares?
I dance the fastest dances,
Sing the saddest songs
And tell the funniest jokes around.
                    So what?

I'm going to leave this school.
And after a week, the only person
Who'll know I've left
Will be the registrar.
He'll know because I mess up his records.
He'll say, "Well, are you coming back or not?"

I'm not.

CLASHES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LENNY

by MARJORIE MILLER

Characters LENNY
SANDRA
PETE
FLORENCE

They are high school friends who have recently graduated. Lenny works in a gas station. Pete has a job in a bottling plant. Florence hopes for a career as a singer. Sandra works in her sister's beauty shop.

Scene 1: A drugstore.

LENNY: Money. If you've got it, you're safe. They can't touch you.

SANDRA: Don't kid yourself. Money doesn't talk.

PETE: You're wrong, baby. My old man has the right idea. A tough hide and a wad of bills. That's all you gotta have to get along.

FLORENCE: If you *are* somebody, you're treated with respect. It's talent that matters. And doing something with that talent.

LENNY: Who's been kidding you?

FLORENCE: (Stubbornly) All I need is a break.

LENNY: Who's going to give you a break? Unless there's something in it for them?

FLORENCE: Singers are discovered all the time.

LENNY: Sure. But they go out and sing so somebody can find them.

FLORENCE: I'm trying.

LENNY: How? The church choir?

FLORENCE: (Angrily) What's wrong with that?

LENNY: Where's it getting you?

FLORENCE: It's good experience.

SANDRA: Stop giving her a hard time, Lenny.

LENNY: Who's giving her a hard time?

PETE: Sandra's right, Lenny. If I could sing, I'd be singing in the choir and waiting for a break, too.

LENNY: If you could sing, wouldn't you be doing more about it?

FLORENCE: (Almost in tears) I *am* trying. I'm doing the best I know how.

LENNY: That's not very good, is it?

FLORENCE: You're so smart. What *should* I do?

LENNY: You know what I think. Take that job old man Nelson's always offering you in the club.

FLORENCE: I can't.

LENNY: Why can't you?

FLORENCE: You know why.

LENNY: I want to hear you tell me.

FLORENCE: (Upset) Because my father won't let me.

LENNY: (Mimicking her) Because my father won't let me. What're you going to be? His little girl forever?

PETE: C'mon, Lenny. Lay off.

LENNY: Lay off? Why? (To Florence) You should thank me. I'm trying to help. What do the rest of us have to sell? Nothing.

SANDRA: That's not true.

LENNY: Isn't it? What have we got? A high school diploma. What's so great about that? You study a lot of junk that doesn't help you with anything.

SANDRA: That's not true and you know it. Without an education you don't have a chance.

LENNY: What chance do you have with one? Take my dad. He went to high school. A couple of years of college, too. And what's he doing? Preaching every Sunday in some two-bit store front. Telling people to be good and God will look after them. As far as I can see, he hasn't done such a hot job so far. We never have any money. We scrape and beg. When we pass the plate on Sunday, we hope we'll get enough money to eat the next week. One week we got enough for food, but the gas and lights were turned off.

PETE: (Quietly) What are *you* doing about it? Chuck said you quit your job yesterday.

SANDRA: Lenny!

LENNY: Yeah. That's right. I did.

FLORENCE: Why?

LENNY: Because I'm tired of saying, "Yessir, Yessir, Yessir."

PETE: You should have my job!

LENNY: But at least you've got some place to go. Better jobs you can get. How can I get ahead in a gas station?

SANDRA: But what about your family?

LENNY: What about them? Let them starve. I don't care. Let my father go out and work, too. I've been working since I was six years old so my old man could have time to visit the sick and the poor. Well, we're the sick and the poor, too, but nobody ever thinks about that.

SANDRA: You know how much good your family does. When my little sister died, your father was there almost when it happened.

He stayed with us most of the night – your mother brought food. We'll never forget what he did for us.

LENNY: So what do *I* have to do? Die to get him to pay some attention to me? I need some help, too. I'm tired of struggling. I'm tired of working. I'm tired of getting nowhere.

PETE: Join the club, Lenny. Join the club.

Scene 2: Two weeks later. Nelson's teen-age hangout. Florence has just finished her first show. Lenny, Sandra, and Pete are in the audience.

LENNY: I've got to admit it. The kid's good.

SANDRA: Good! She's wonderful.

LENNY: How'd she ever get around her old man?

SANDRA: You made her mad, Lenny. You were right. She needed somebody to talk to her like that.

LENNY: (Curiously) What did her father say when he found out?

PETE: They had a big fight. I was there – we had a date that night. She told him she was going to take the job, and he finally just shrugged and said to go ahead.

LENNY: He's a bully. They're all cowards underneath. All you have to do is call their bluff.

SANDRA: (Affectionately) How do you know so much?

LENNY: Brains! You know – some of us have them, and some of us don't.

SANDRA: Stop bragging and move your chair over. Here comes Florence.

PETE: (To Florence as she sits down at their table) Hey, you were great!

FLORENCE: Was I good? Was I really good?

SANDRA: Honey, you were wonderful! Didn't you hear us clapping?

FLORENCE: (Very pleased) I couldn't hear anything. I was so scared. (Laughs) But I could go back and do it again.

PETE: She's gone. She'll be too good for us. The acting bug has bit.

FLORENCE: (Laughing) Bitten, silly.

(They are silent, drinking cokes, happy being together. Then Lenny speaks.)

LENNY: I'm gonna be gone, too.

PETE: Where're you goin', buddy? Home to bed?

LENNY: Nope. Guess again.

SANDRA: Late date?

LENNY: (Laughs) Couldn't afford it.

FLORENCE: Stop being so mysterious. Is it a joke?

LENNY: No joke. I joined the army today.

SANDRA: Lenny!

LENNY: Won't I look great as a soldier boy?

FLORENCE: What did your mother say?

LENNY: I haven't told her. She worries too much about everything.

(There is silence. Finally Pete speaks.)

PETE: When do you leave?

LENNY: End of the week.

SANDRA: We'll miss you, Lenny. Everybody kind of depends on you.

LENNY: (Casually) You'll get along. I decided Uncle Sam needs ol' Lenny, too. I want to get in there and fight. Besides, the pay's pretty good.

PETE: So your folks'll have lights and food, too, huh?

LENNY: Yeah. Something like that.

Scene 3: Six months later. Sandra's house.

PETE: What time is the train supposed to get here?

SANDRA: At noon.

PETE: Are you going down to meet it?

SANDRA: Yes. (She hesitates.) Are you?

PETE: I don't know. I'm kinda scared.

SANDRA: (Quietly) I know. So am I.

PETE: Are you going with Lenny's folks?

SANDRA: No. Alone, unless you come with me.

PETE: Did you call Florence?

SANDRA: I tried last night, but her show is traveling by bus and they're still on the road.

PETE: I don't want to go. I won't know what to say.

SANDRA: You won't have to say anything. Just be there.

PETE: Lenny's dead. He's gone. I keep saying it over and over, but I don't want to believe it. I don't want to see them take Lenny off that train in a box. He can't be dead. They're wrong. Maybe the army made a mistake or something. Maybe it's some other guy. I don't want to know.

SANDRA: (Softly) I know. I cried all night. All I could wonder was why? Why him? Why Lenny? He was so good. So strong. He made us all better than we knew we could be.

PETE: He saved a lot of guys from being killed, didn't he? He'd be glad about that.

SANDRA: Yes. He would.

PETE: Have you talked to his dad?

SANDRA: Yes.

PETE: How is he?

SANDRA: Sort of like he always is – trying to make us all feel better.

PETE: Swell! Still isn't thinking of his own kid.

SANDRA: You've got it wrong. Lenny and his father were very close. Lenny talked big and tough, but he didn't mean half of it. He wrote his dad some letters from over there that were pretty nice. His dad showed me one of them.

PETE: It doesn't bring him back, though, does it? It doesn't prove anything. Except that we're all a bunch of jerks and Lenny had to get it.

SANDRA: It sounds kind of corny, but in a way he died for us — I don't mean just fighting the war, but he makes me want to be better. So that maybe wherever he is, he'll know.

PETE: That *is* corny. You're kidding yourself. Trying to figure a way to make it easier.

SANDRA: Sure. You're right. But that's better than making it harder, isn't it?

PETE: (Suddenly) I can't go meet that train.

SANDRA: It's all right, Pete. We all have to face it in our own way. Lenny probably wouldn't have gone down either.

PETE: (Looking at her as he thinks about what she has said) You're wrong, Sandra. He would have. He would have gone to meet the train. If that had been me coming home dead, he'd have been there. (He pauses.) Okay. Let's go, Sandra. I'm ready.

HOME AGAIN, HOME AGAIN

by JOHN DURHAM

Cassie couldn't see the man through the screen door. He was only a dark outline against the September glare. "Who is it?" she asked.

"Don't you really know me?" he said. The sound of the voice brought some old memory back to Cassie.

"I can't even see you," Cassie said. "Who is it?"

"Why, girl, it's you own daddy," the man said.

"Who you foolin'?" Cassie said. "Why, my daddy's *dead*. He's been dead for five years."

The man out there laughed in his throat. "I make a mighty lively corpse," he said.

"My daddy died in Mississippi," Cassie said. "Five years ago." Why was she so stirred, deep inside her? "Who are you, foolin' around like that?"

"I'll tell you somethin'," the man said. His voice was soft. "Remember that rockin' horse? Remember that? When you was four? It was white with a red mane. Don't you remember? You called him Fire, that rockin' horse."

That old memory was like the taste of copper, like an old penny on the tongue. It was her father, in the bad time, before he went away. All the trouble with Mama.

"I remember that horse," Cassie said. "You broke it, when you were drunk."

"Them was bad times for me," the man said. "Bad times. Ain't you gonna let me in the house?"

"Willie Mae, she come back from Mississippi. She said my daddy died in Jackson. Five years ago."

"I was mighty sick. But I pulled through." The man laughed softly again. "See me? Right here on your doorstep."

"You look too old to be my daddy," Cassie said. "You wait a minute." She went in and got her textbooks from the sideboard in the dining room. Then she went back to the front door and went out onto the porch. The man stood smiling at her, gap-toothed. He looked old, old, sixty anyway. And her daddy wasn't fifty. His face was drawn on one side, the right side. The right eyelid drooped and his head trembled on his neck.

He seemed to know what she was thinking. "I done had myself a stroke," he said. "Two strokes. Can't hardly walk."

"You don't look like him," Cassie said.

"You was just a little child," he said, "when I done up and left. And I was a man then." He fingered his lower lip with a trembling hand. "I tell you somethin' only you and me knows. One time, it was in the back yard of the house in Wilmington. Remember? I whittled you a basket out of a peach seed. A little, tiny basket." He laughed. "And you, you done put a flower in it, this little teensy flower."

"How come you're back?"

"You don't want me," he said. "And I got only myself to blame for that."

"Why, Daddy, you just up and left us! You just walked out! Without a word to anyone."

"I did," he said. "It was a bad time for me."

"Bad times for us, too. We didn't have the least idea where you were. For years, Daddy. How could you do that?"

"Didn't have no work," he said. "Couldn't get no work. Walked all over L.A., I did, lookin'. And they wasn't nothin'."

"You were too good for the work there was," Cassie said.

"Them's your mama's words. Sure," he said. "Charley, he told me, here's fifteen toilet bowls a day. You clean 'em, baby. You clean 'em and we let you eat. You clean 'em and we let you halfway support your wife and child. And your mama, she –"

"Don't you say anything against my mama. She stayed here, Daddy. She stayed with me."

"She did," he said. "She did and I give her credit for that."

"She don't need your credit. She *stayed*."

"Wasn't a day," he said, "when I didn't think about you. Wasn't a day I didn't wonder how you was."

"Oh, Daddy," Cassie said, angered, "why couldn't you tell us where you were? Why couldn't you do that?"

"I guess," he said, "I guess I was just ashamed. Leavin' like that. And every day made it worse. Yeah. Every day that passed me by, I felt worse." He rubbed his cheeks with both hands. "Don't want you to think it was easy," he said, "for me, either."

He wasn't crying. Not quite. Cassie was touched. A man crying, an old man like this. A sick old man, her father. But it had been so long that she had hated him for leaving her and Mama. She had hated him for a long time.

"I felt better about you," she told him, "when I thought you were dead."

"Sure," he said.

"I have to go to class," Cassie said.

"Class?"

"I'm a freshman in college," she said. "But you wouldn't know that, being gone."

"That's fine," he said, trying to smile.

"Mama, she gets home from work around five. You come back then. It's her house."

"I don't blame you," he said. "I don't blame you for bein' hard."

"You come back when Mama's here." Cassie went past him quickly. She went around back to the garage. Inside her old car, she almost began to cry. She set her books on the front seat and turned the key in the lock. She almost cried then, thinking about all the years he had been gone. She was thinking about how old he looked and what a fine, big man he was when he left.

That night, Cassie sat in the big chair reading. Her mother ironed. There was a long, long silence.

"I don't care," Cassie said finally. "Mama, it's your house."

"Oh, it's easy to say he was wrong," her mother said. "And he *was*. Oh, yes. But a colored man, he don't know which way to go."

"Mama, there were other colored men who stayed."

"Oh, yes." Her mother set down the iron and took a sip from her iced tea. "Some stayed. But your daddy was a proud man."

"Not too proud to go traipsin' off with that woman," Cassie said.

"That's right," her mother said. She picked up the iron and went back to work on Cassie's blouse. "But he's old now. He's sick. He's got no place to go."

"He fought in the war. He's a veteran. Let him go to a veteran's hospital."

"You been in a hospital. Would you want to live there? For the rest of your life?"

"Mama, I didn't go off and leave my wife and child. I worked since I was fifteen. I saved every penny so I could go to college. I won't have to ask for charity when I'm his age."

"You got it all planned."

"Sure I have. And I'll make it work, too."

"Not every mouse dies in the nest he builds," her mother said. "Cat gets some."

"Sure," Cassie said. "Sure. But he could have tried. He didn't try."

"He tried. You don't remember. When we married, he was the prettiest man. And *sweet*. Nothin' he wouldn't do for me. Not a payday he missed bringin' his pay. Then he got fired."

"There were other jobs."

"There were, sure. He got one. And he lost that. Man didn't need him no more. And another one. And he lost *that*. That's when he started drinkin'. You don't remember."

"You're gonna let him come back," Cassie said. "Mama, you are."

"He's an old man," her mother said. "He's tired. And I never did stop lovin' him."

Mostly Cassie's father just sat on the porch in the nylon lawn chair her mother bought for him. He sat and watched the traffic pass on the street. Sometimes he read the paper; his hand shook. His eyes wavered behind the dime store glasses. Cassie would come in from class or from her job at the bank.

"Evenin', girl," her father would say.

"Hello," Cassie would say, very cool. And that was all the talk between them. At supper Cassie sat stiff. Her father's hand shook and he was messy with his food. Cassie sat stiff, watching him. She didn't talk except to answer direct questions.

"You're hard," her mother said to her privately one night. "You're too hard on him."

"I got to be hard," Cassie said. "In the kind of world the white man gives me, I *got* to be hard. I got to be hard just to live. If I want something, I got to be harder."

"Not with your own," her mother said.

"He's not my own. He left *me*," Cassie said. "He gave me up. Years and years ago."

So the weeks passed and the months. It was January. Cold rain whipped the city. Her father sat inside now, by the TV. It was exam time for Cassie. She spent most of her time in the library on campus, studying. Or she closed herself in her room.

One day she came out to make herself coffee so that she wouldn't fall asleep.

Her father turned away from the TV to look at her. "You're workin' hard, girl," he said.

"Yes."

"You got tests?" he said.

"Yes."

"You work," he said humbly. "That's the thing to do."

Cassie made her coffee and came out of the kitchen. Her father slumped in the big chair. His chin lay on his chest. One hand trailed on the old carpet. His feet stuck out in front of him.

"Daddy!" she screamed. "Oh, Daddy, Daddy!"

Two weeks later he came home from the hospital. He couldn't talk now. One corner of his mouth drooped badly. He could walk only when someone helped him. He had to be fed, one spoonful at a time.

Only his eyes seemed alive. His eyes watched Cassie as she spooned up his rice and beans and brought them to his mouth. What did he know, behind those eyes? Did he know that Cassie loved him? Did he know she had cried all night when he went to the hospital? Cried like a little girl? What did he know?

"Cassie, baby," her mother said, "you can't give up your school like this."

"School will wait." They sat in the living room. Her father had been put to bed.

"How long will it wait?" her mother said.

"I'm young," Cassie said. "He won't live long."

Her mother shook her head. "I don't understand it," she said. "How come you changed so?"

"Two months, the doctor said. Then I'll go back to work." Cassie sighed. "In September I'll go back to school."

"We could get someone in. Mrs. Willers would come."

"It's all right, Mama. I want to do it."

"He don't even know."

"He knows, Mama. He remembers things."

Was that why Cassie had changed about her father? She didn't know. Was it only death that made her change? The death she saw in her father's face? Was it because she remembered so many things now? Not only the peach seed basket. Not only the rocking horse. But all the times her father sang to her. "Red River Valley," he sang. And "The Midnight Special." And even the nursery rhymes, when she was tiny:

To market, to market
To buy a fat pig.
Home again, home again,
Jiggety jig.

She remembered the songs he sang, back then. She remembered. He would never sing again. Well, he had left her. He had left her and Mama. He was home again, for her.

THE RED VELVET DOG

by JANE SPRAGUE

Laura rolled over on her face and pulled the pillow as tight as she could around her ears. Why did they have to fight all the time?

In the living room, right next to Laura's room, her parents yelled and slammed things. And all the time, the TV played on.

Her parents probably thought Laura couldn't hear them yelling because of the TV, but she could. She heard every ugly, mean word they said.

"You're so stupid you won't have that new job more'n a week," Laura's mother screamed.

"Now, Bess, don't start that again. Let me have some quiet, *please*." Laura's father had a deep, powerful voice.

"Quiet? When do *I* have any quiet? I'm always worrying about money, wondering when you're going to get a job. If you've got one, then I worry how long it will last. When do *I* have any quiet in my mind? I ask you."

The father answered slowly, his deep voice full of anger.

"Woman, you got all the quiet your mind will let you have. Those worries are in in your own mind. Worryin' won't help me find a better job. It won't help me keep the one I've got. All you do is make us all miserable. Why can't you just let me be?"

"Let you be?" His wife's voice was shrill and sharp. "How can I let you be? We're behind in most of the bills. Laura needs school shoes and skirts. I need shoes to wear to work. Man, you make me sick. Let you be? I'll do just that someday. I'm so *sick* of messin' with you."

A house-shaking crash followed her words. Laura felt it shake the springs of her bed. He had slammed the door and gone out again. He would be gone for hours.

When he came back, he would smell of beer and stale cigarette smoke. He would stagger when he walked; maybe he would even sing. Then he would fall into a chair or onto the couch and sleep.

Laura rolled onto her back and punched her pillow into shape under her head. She stared up at the dark ceiling. Why were her parents unhappy? How did it start? As long as she could remember, they had fights. But in the past year it had grown worse and worse.

What will happen to them? she thought. How could all three of them go on living together? The house was full of trouble and tears. And in answer to her thought, tears ran out of the corners of her eyes. They dropped to the pillow.

The next day was Saturday. Laura woke early because she was used to going to school early.

She dressed in old capris and a poor-boy shirt, and put on a pair of worn-out go-aheads. She went into the living room quietly.

Her father was there, just as she knew he would be. His shoes were in the middle of the floor. The laces were still tied. His shirt was hanging over the chair. His belt was curled up like a snake by the couch.

He had an old thin cotton blanket pulled up to his chin. One hand was under his head, and one knee stuck out from under the blanket. Both the couch and blanket were too little for him, Laura thought. And wait until Mom sees that he slept in his good pants again.

She picked up his shoes and set them neatly under the edge of the couch. She picked up his shirt and put it over the arm of the couch. It smelled of beer and smoke and sweat.

Then she went into the kitchen and started a pot of coffee. She knew he would need it.

Laura went back into the living room and sat down in the big chair. She curled her legs up under her and looked at her father.

How different he looked when he was asleep. He seemed weaker and younger when she couldn't hear his deep voice. His face was relaxed. No angry lines showed now. She loved his face like this. How could her mother lock him out and make him sleep on that cramped couch? How could she not love him and not want to see him happy?

The smell of fresh coffee began to come into the room. She knew it would wake him up quicker than anything else. Soon he began to stretch. Finally, his eyes opened.

"Hi, Sugar." His voice was deep and soft.

"Hi, Daddy. Want some coffee?"

"Uhm-uhm! You bet I do. Smells great." He stretched his arms way over his head. Then he threw back the blanket and sat up. His pants were wrinkled.

"I'll have to press those pants before Mom sees them," Laura said.

"Yeah. I guess you will."

Laura went into the kitchen and came back with a hot cup of coffee. She carried it over to him and put it into his hands.

He sniffed the good smell of it. Then he sipped it slowly.

Laura went back to the big chair. "What are you going to do today, Daddy."

"I don't know. What have you got in your head? Something, I'll bet."

"How did you guess?"

"Fathers are smart, that's all." He winked at her. "What do you want me to do?"

"Take me to the county fair."

"The fair! All the way out there?"

"Oh, please, Daddy. They've been telling about it on TV. I've never been to a fair. Could we go, just you and me? Please?"

He sipped his coffee and looked over the edge of his cup at Laura. He sipped and thought for several minutes.

"Well, pretty soon you're going to be all grown-up. Then you won't be wanting to go anywhere with your old man."

"I'll never be that old, Daddy. Does that mean we're going?"

He smiled and put his empty cup down. "I guess it does, Sugar. But we've got to start now if we're going by bus. It's a long ways from here."

"Ooooooo! Daddy! You're the best daddy in the whole world." Laura put her arms around his neck and hugged him as hard as she could.

They got ready in a hurry. They left a note for Laura's mother. Then within half an hour they were gone, like two kids happy about ditching school.

They liked the bus ride through the busy city.

When they got to the fairgrounds, they went to every part of the fair from one end to the other. They ate everything that looked good to them, from sticky pink cotton candy to shiny red candy apples.

They watched the people, smelled the strange animal smell mixed with the sweet smell of fresh hay. They rode every one of the rides. Laura screamed her head off, and her father laughed at her.

At last, just before it was time to catch the bus, they stopped in front of a baseball throwing game. One of the big prizes was a big, red velvet dog about two feet high. It had eyes like round diamonds and a black nose. It had a silly, happy look that Laura liked.

"Oh, Daddy, look at that silly dog up there."

"That red velvet one?"

"Isn't he cute?"

Laura's father gave the man a quarter and picked up three baseballs. There were three silver-painted milk bottles to knock over.

"Those bottles are heavy, even if they look light. You really have to hit them hard to knock them over," he said. "Here, hold my coat for me."

Holding his coat, Laura stood over at the side of the booth and watched her father get ready to throw. He used to play a lot of baseball. You could see that by just watching him move.

He threw one ball, and all the bottles went down. The man smiled and held up a little doll. That was the first and smallest prize you could win.

"Keep it, mister. I'm after that red velvet dog."

Time after time Laura's father threw, and every time the bottles fell. A crowd gathered around to watch as he won more and more points on the way up to the dog.

People smiled and talked about her father. Laura felt so much pride in him that her eyes filled with tears. But he paid no attention to the people. His mind was on what he was doing. He was big and powerful. Every motion was smooth and strong. Laura wanted to shout out to everyone, "That's *my* father."

Too soon it was all over. The crowd clapped when the man held up the big, beautiful red velvet dog. Her father took it, and with a fancy old-fashioned bow, put it into Laura's arms. The crowd clapped again. Laura knew he was proud of her, too. It was a wonderful moment she always wanted to remember.

They were quiet and happy riding home on the bus. They looked at the lights and the fountains in front of the clean, new white buildings downtown. How beautiful the city is, thought Laura. And how safe it is when a girl has a young, strong father.

But it wasn't safe after all, when they got home to her mother.

"Well, it's about time you two turned up. Who do you think you are, going off to the fair and spending a lot of money on stupid junk?"

Laura's heart sank. "Oh, mother, we had such a good time. Why do you have to spoil it?"

"Spoil it? I'll spoil you if you don't shut up. I'm talking to your stupid father." She looked at him coldly. "Well, have you got any money left from your pay check?"

He reached slowly into his back pocket and took out his wallet. "Here's twenty dollars," he said.

"Twenty dollars! Is that all you have left from your check? You spent almost a *week's pay* on junk like this thing?"

Laura's mother reached out and grabbed the red velvet dog out of Laura's arms.

"Just look at that thing," she yelled. "How much did you pay for it?" She shook it right in front of his nose.

The father stepped back and quietly took the dog out of her hand. "I won it knocking down fake milk bottles with a baseball." He handed the dog gently back to Laura. She ran to her room and shut the door.

She threw herself down on her bed and cried, holding the velvet dog close to her. The lovely day was gone. Life was just the same. Things were aways going to be dark and unhappy.

She covered her ears to shut out the voices that got louder and louder in the living room. After a while her tiredness from the long day's walking made her fall asleep.

When she woke up, the lamp by her bed was still on, and it was still dark outside. Beyond her door, all was quiet.

Laura got up and put the red dog down on the bed. She went out into the living room. Her mother was in her room because her door was shut. Two suitcases stood by the front door. Her father sat on the couch, writing something.

"Daddy, what's going on?"

"Oh, hi, Sugar. I thought you were in bed."

"What are you doing?" Something in his face made her heart sink.

"I'm just writing a couple of things down for your mother."

"Why? Are you going somewhere? Why are those suitcases by the door?"

"Well, Sugar, your mother and I are going to split up for a while."

"Spit up! What do you mean?" Her heart was pounding now. She felt as if she was part of a movie on TV. This didn't seem real. It just *couldn't* be real.

He stood up and put the paper on the arm of the couch. With sad pain in his eyes, he looked down at Laura.

"You know we don't get along, Sugar. Your mother and me . . . we just don't see eye to eye any longer, if we ever did. It's best if I go, I guess."

"Go? Where are you going to go?" Laura's voice was high and scared. "You're going to take me with you, aren't you?"

He looked down at the floor and slowly shook his head.

"But why not? I don't want to live here without you."

"Your mother can take care of a young lady like you better than I can. A girl needs her mother when she's growing up fast like you."

He moved slowly over to the door, looked around the room, and opened the door.

Laura was frozen in her place for a moment. Then she ran to him and put her arms around his neck. "No, Daddy, don't go. Please, don't go."

He kissed her quickly and gave her a bear hug. Then he pulled her arms from his neck, picked up the suitcases, and went out the door. He stopped and turned back toward her.

"Now, Sugar, don't make a fuss. It's not going to be forever. You watch the mail for a letter. Now, go inside and lock the door. Get some sleep. You'll feel right as rain in the morning."

He smiled at her and winked.

"Do as I say, now. Shut the door. Then I'll go."

Slowly, like a girl in a dream, Laura pushed the door shut. Slowly, she turned the lock. She heard his footsteps go down the steps and out to the street.

She threw herself down on the couch and cried herself to sleep again.

In the morning, Laura's mother woke her up by getting breakfast in the kitchen.

Laura got up and went to wash her face and comb her hair.

When she came into the kitchen, her breakfast was ready. It was a special breakfast.

"Laura, I've got something to tell you."

"You don't have to. I was up when he left." Laura's eyes filled with tears. How could she eat eggs and toast when her father was gone?

"Now, don't start crying. If he sends me some money to help pay for your food and clothes, you can see him every week."

Laura felt a little hope begin to live in her heart.

"I can? But what if he loses his job and can't send any money?"

"Well, then, no money, no daughter. That's the deal we made."

"But that's not fair. I want to see him anyway."

"Well, you won't unless he cares enough about you to send money. Now eat your breakfast before it gets cold."

Laura choked down the food as fast as she could and went to her room.

There was the red velvet dog, sleeping on her bed just where she had left him.

Suddenly, Laura heard a new sound from the living room. Her mother was crying! Did she miss him, too?

Laura squeezed the red velvet dog as hard as she could. If her mother missed her father already, maybe there was a chance. Maybe after they had time to be lonely, her mother and father would be able to talk things over. Maybe before too long they'd all be together again.

"He'll come back," Laura whispered to herself. "He'll come back pretty soon."

THE GAME

by JOHN DURHAM

Billy knew he ought to be gone. He knew his daddy was coming. But he was caught in the song. He was hung up on the sound of his voice. He was trapped by the chords he made on his guitar.

Went down Saint James Infirmary
To see my sweetie there,
Stretched out on a table,
So cold, so sweet, so bare.

Man, the guitar was smooth, smooth. And his voice was just right. Kind of grainy and light and right into the song. He sat in the kitchen, on one of the wooden chairs. His coffee, on the table, was cold. He had on jeans and an old shirt. His feet were bare on the cool linoleum. Everything was just right. The chords were slipping out through his fingers like little bright fish.

That was when the back door opened. It was his daddy, big like always, looking tired and mean. He came in and closed the door and set down his lunch bucket. He took off his denim jacket and threw it across one of the chairs.

"Boy," he said then, "how come you at home?"

Billy hit a last sweet chord.

"Nothin' to do at school," he said. "Just the same old thing."

"How many times I told you?" his daddy said. "How many times your mother told you?"

"Yeah," Billy said. "You told me."

"How come you don't listen? Huh? How come you don't?"

"I listen, Daddy."

"Sure, you do. You listen and listen. Then you do what you want. Ain't that right?"

"I guess," Billy said.

"I *know*," his daddy said. "You see me, comin' in from the market. All night long I throw around them heavy cases of stuff. You see me comin' in bone weary. You want that? You want fifty years of that?"

"No sir. No sir, I don't."

"Then how come you don't go to school? Tell me that."

"It's just a drag," Billy said. He didn't say he had to try out the new chords he thought of last night. That would just make his daddy madder. His daddy hated that guitar. He hated it. "School ain't never nothin' but a drag," he said.

"Now ain't that too bad," his daddy said. "Maybe if they give you five or six hours of guitar lessons. Maybe then you'd stay."

Billy didn't say anything.

"Ralph, he quit school. Look where he is."

"Yessir," Billy said.

"He's up for eight more years, anyway," his daddy said. "You want that?"

"I ain't broke into no drugstores. I won't, neither."

"A man got to live someway. 'Less somebody support him. Me, I ain't gonna support no big hulkin' boy layin' around out of school."

"I didn't quit," Billy said. "I just stayed home today."

"Yeah, and two days last week, too. Ain't that right?"

Billy didn't mean to hit the chord. His fingers did it, by themselves. The sound was rich and full.

"Don't you get smart with me," his daddy said.

"I ain't," Billy said. But his fingers hit another chord, a high, kind of nasty group of notes.

His father came around the table. He grabbed the neck of the guitar and snatched it away from Billy.

"You ain't gonna do that to me," he said.

"Don't break it," Billy said. "Oh, please don't break it. I didn't mean nothin'."

"Sure, you didn't," his daddy said. He just ran the big forefinger of his right hand under the strings. He pulled up and they popped, all six of them. "Now you listen to me," he said. "I'm gonna put this guitar in the closet. You hear me? And you ain't touchin' it till you been to school for a month. Without missin' no days. You hear me?"

"What about the strings?" Billy could almost cry.

"That ain't my worry. That's *your* worry. Now you get out of here. You get to school. You hear me?"

"Yessir," Billy said.

"Well, *go*. I gone call that school in fifteen minutes. They better tell me you come in. You hear?"

"Yessir," Billy said.

When school let out, Billy wandered over to Mrs. Ladd's. He just thought he'd go by. And there Mrs. Ladd was, out on the porch. She was an old, old lady. Her face was dried up and wrinkled like a prune. Her arms were like sticks, with skin and strings of muscle stretched over them.

"Hey, there, boy," she said. "How you doin'?"

"Oh, okay," Billy said. He watched Mrs. Ladd water the potted geraniums on the porch railing.

"Don't sound okay," she said. "You got troubles?"

"Oh, naw," Billy said.

"Where's your guitar box?"

"Home."

"How come? You always got that box."

Billy didn't say anything. He just stood there on the sidewalk, watching her water the flowers.

"You come on up here," Mrs. Ladd said. "And set down a spell. I'll work you up a glass of ice tea."

"You don't need to do that."

"I will," she said. "A glass of the best ice tea in town. Come on up and set."

Billy went up and sat down on the old porch swing. He set it swinging with a kick of his left heel. It screaked in C sharp. He swung back and forth, humming to the screak of the swing. His hands felt empty without the guitar. But the song came out of him anyway.

Trouble in mind, Lord, I'm blue,
But I won't be blue always. . . .

"That's pretty," Mrs. Ladd said. She came out the screen door with the iced tea in her hand. She handed it to Billy and sat down in the chair near the swing.

"I bet you didn't know," she said, "I had me a boy like you, once."

Billy knew, all right. She had told him fifty times. But she was an old lady. She forgot things. "How long ago was that?" Billy said.

"Don't seem no time at all," Mrs. Ladd said. "He a big man now, that boy."

"What's he do?" Billy said. He knew. But Mrs. Ladd liked it when he asked.

"He got himself a big insurance agency," she said. "Over there in Chicago. He makin' a pile of money."

Billy hummed a line of "Trouble in Mind."

"He busy, though," Mrs. Ladd said. "Don't have much time for me no more."

"That's too bad."

"Oh, he *call* me. Once, twice a month. He call me up on the telephone from Chicago."

"Must cost a lot," Billy said.

"He say it do," Mrs. Ladd said. "And I guess it do. That boy," she said, "you know he used to play a guitar?"

"I didn't know that," Billy said. He knew, all right. But it was kind of a game. "Was he good?"

"He sang like an angel," Mrs. Ladd said. "Right out of heaven. And *play*. Oh, he could play that thing!"

"I bet you still got that box of his," Billy said.

"Right in my closet," Mrs. Ladd said. "Shiny and bright as new. I polish it up ever week."

"I wonder how it sounds," Billy said. "After all this time."

"I don't rightly know how to tune it," Mrs. Ladd said. "But the strings are tight."

"You know somethin' about a guitar?" Billy said.

"What's that?"

"It got to be played. You know a car, how they are? You store a car, you got to start it and warm it up every day. You know that? A guitar, it's just the same. You got to play it. Or it goes dead."

"Is that right?" Mrs. Ladd said. "But, me, I don't know the first thing about –"

"Why, ma'am," Billy said, "it wouldn't be no trouble for me to play it a little. Just to warm it up."

"I wouldn't want to put you out," Mrs. Ladd said.

"No trouble at all," Billy said.

It wasn't any new guitar. It wasn't even a good one. And she had forgotten to shine it, for a long time. There was dust on the box. And the strings were loose. But Billy brushed it off on his sleeve and tuned up the strings.

"Any special tune you like to hear?"

"I don't know," Mrs. Ladd said.

"You sure? Some song you kinda like more than others?"

"There is one song."

"What song is that?" Billy said. He knew. It was always the same song. Every time he stopped and played for her. Every time his daddy caught him with the guitar and took it away from him.

"What song you want me to play?" he said.

"Don't suppose you know 'Danny Boy'?"

"Why, sure I do," Billy said. "It go like this." He played the opening chords crisp and clean. Out in the street a car went by. The trees, dusty with October, stirred in the warm breeze. The sun fell lemon-colored on the houses across the way. He hit the opening chords and they felt good. Then he went into the lyrics, low and sweet.

Oh, Danny boy,
The pipes, the pipes, are calling,
From glen to glen
And down the mountainside.
The summer's gone
And all the roses falling,
It's you, it's you, must go
And I must bide.

He didn't have to watch Mrs. Ladd. He knew she would be crying. She always cried when he got to the next line. "But come you back, when summer's on the meadow." She always cried then. He guessed she was thinking about her boy. It made him sad, too.

Sometimes his eyes kind of misted over. It was a sweet old song. It wasn't his kind of song, but he kind of liked it when he played it for Mrs. Ladd.

It was after six when he set down the guitar. He had played a lot of songs. Some of his kind and some of hers. Thirty songs, maybe.

"That was mighty pretty," Mrs. Ladd said. "You sure you got to go?"

"My momma gonna want me for supper," Billy said. "I'm late now."

"You got to go then," Mrs. Ladd said. "A boy ought to think about his momma. A boy ought to keep his momma in mind."

"Thank you kindly for the tea," Billy said.

"Why, that wasn't no trouble," Mrs. Ladd said. "You come back some time. You pass by here from school, you just stop in. You say that guitar, it need tunin' up?"

"It sure do," Billy said. "Once a day wouldn't be too much."

"Well," Mrs. Ladd said, "you stop by, you got time."

"It ain't no trouble," Billy said.

He ran down the steps and out to the sidewalk. A sad dusk gathered in the trees. Birds dropped from the sky, out of the darkening blue. The grass on Mrs. Ladd's lawn was a deep, deep green.

He turned and looked back at Mrs. Ladd. She stood on the porch. She lifted one thin arm and waved to him. "You come back, now," she called.

"Goodbye," he said. He lifted his hand. "I'll be back," he said. Then he turned and walked away into the gathering night.

SOMETHING NEW FOR ROSE

by JOHN DURHAM

"I told you, Mama," Rose said. "Fifty dollars a week. That's what they'll pay me."

"You ain't been here a day," her mother said, "and already you're causing trouble."

"How did I cause trouble?"

"Being nasty to Louie. That's one way. That's *one* way."

"He's always smiling at me. And saying things."

"That's just Louie. That don't mean a thing. You ought to know that."

"Well, tell him to leave me alone."

"I better see some of that fifty dollars," her mother said. "Things were quiet when you were up there at Ventura. It was quiet around here. No problems."

"Mama, don't you want me back? Don't you want me at home?"

"Did I say I didn't want you? Did I say that?" Her mother took a long swallow from her beer. "I didn't say that."

"Is Louie going to hang around here?"

"I didn't say that, either," her mother said. "But sometimes he does. Sure." The beer was making her braver.

"Oh, Mama," Rose said. She shook her head.

"You can sleep right over there on the couch," her mother said. "It ain't as good as that fancy room up there. But it's good enough."

"I didn't say it wasn't good enough. But why you have to go around with Louie –" Rose shook her head again.

"They sure filled your head with stuff up there," her mother said. "Nice clothes and pretty room and that. What did they say you were? When you graduated?"

"Valedictorian."

Her mother laughed. "I couldn't even pronounce it," she said. "Well, you're home now," she said. "They let you out and you're home now."

"Why didn't you come?" Rose said. "For graduation. I wrote you. I wrote you last week."

"Louie borrowed all my money," her mother said. "I didn't have penny one. I was busted. Besides," she said, "that place gave me the creeps, I can tell you. They give you these books?" She picked up three books Rose had left on the table.

"I bought them with money I earned," Rose said.

"Huh," her mother said. She dropped the books back onto the table, into the little puddle of beer she had made there.

Rose reached over and picked them up. She wiped them with a Kleenex she took from her skirt pocket.

"I don't do nothin' good enough," her mother said. "I don't even know how to set down books."

"I didn't say that, Mama. But I don't want them wet."

"Ventura," her mother said. "So fancy and that. But it was nothin' but a prison for girls. Hopheads and thieves."

Rose looked at her for a long time. "I took those clothes from that store, Mama. I took them, and I got sent to Ventura. I was wrong. But that was three years ago. I finished high school at the head of my class. And now I'm out, and I have a job."

"La-de-dah," her mother said. "Head of a class of hopheads and thieves."

"Mama," Rose said. She thought she could not stand any more. Her throat felt raw, and her eyes were wet. She couldn't stand much more. "Mama, don't," she said.

"It just makes me mad," her mother said. She looked at Rose, sideways. She took another long drink from the beer. Her mother was not old, only thirty-six. But she looked old now. She looked older than she should.

Rose stood up. "I'm going down to the drugstore," she said.

"What for?"

"Oh, a lipstick. I'm out."

"Bring back some beer."

"Mama, I don't have –"

"Just one six-pack," her mother said. "Louie, he'll bring some later. Just one six-pack. A lousy dollar and a quarter, that's all."

"Oh, all right," Rose said. She had eight dollars to get her through the first week of work. Eight dollars.

She didn't buy the beer for her mother. She didn't even buy the lipstick for herself. She was in the drugstore when she made up her mind. She dropped the lipstick she was looking at. The girl behind the counter looked startled.

"Is something wrong, Miss?" she said.

Rose shook her head. "No," she said. "Thank you." She almost ran back to the apartment.

Louie was there when she came in, sitting with her mother.

"Where's the beer?" her mother said.

Rose didn't answer.

"What's the matter with her?" her mother said to Louie.

"She looks a little excited," Louie said. "Freedom's going to her head."

Rose didn't say anything. She started packing her bag.

"What do you think you're doing?" her mother said.

"You can see," Rose said. "I'm packing."

"You just got home," her mother said. "What are you? Nuts?"

"Maybe," Rose said. "Maybe I am."

"You haven't got no money," her mother said. "A lousy few dollars."

"I know that," Rose said.

"I'll call your P.O.," her mother said. "She'll straighten you out."

"I'll call her myself," Rose said. "You don't have to. She knows about you."

"What does she know? Huh? Just what does she know?" Her mother got up from the chair and came to lean over her shoulder. "What does that nosy parole officer know about me?"

"Oh, nothing, Mama. I just said that. I don't want to fight. I just want to leave."

"Think you're too good for me, don't you?"

"I didn't say that, Mama. You said that." Rose went on packing her bag. She put in the three books.

"I'll show you who's too good," her mother said. She grabbed one of the books out of the bag. She opened it and began tearing the pages. Tearing them out of the book and flinging them in the air.

"Oh, *Mama*," Rose wailed. "Oh, Mama! I loved that book."

"Try loving your own mother," her mother said. She threw the book to the floor. "Try that."

"Why you doing this to your mama?" Louie said.

"You be quiet, you creep," her mother said. "What's it to you?"

"I was just trying –"

"Try keeping your mouth out of my business."

Rose closed the bag. "Goodbye, Mama," she said. "I'll call you sometime."

"She'll call me sometime," Rose's mother said. She was crying. Tears tipped off her eyelashes onto her cheeks. "My own little baby is leaving me. And she'll call me sometime. How can you be so mean?"

"Mama, you don't really want me here," Rose said.

"Who said? I didn't say."

"Mama, you didn't even come to my graduation. And all you talk about is the money I'll bring in. I could live with you, Mama. I can't live with you the way things are."

"I have a right to have friends," her mother said.

"Have him," Rose said. "It's your life to live, Mama. It's not my life. That's all I mean. Live your life the way you want."

"I'll get rid of him," her mother said.

"What am I?" Louie said. "An old shoe or something?"

"You shut up," Rose's mother said. "Go on, get. Get out of here."

"I won't come back," Louie said. "That's for sure. I go, I don't come back. You better think about that."

"Stay," Rose said to him. "She needs you. I *think* she needs you, anyway."

Her mother was crying very hard now. She had her hands up to her eyes. "I didn't ever do it right," she sobbed. "I fouled it all up, ever since you were born."

"No, Mama," Rose said. "No, you didn't. It's all right. I just have to be me."

"I fouled it all up," her mother said. "I'm a worthless bum."

Rose looked at Louie. "You take care of her, huh?"

"Sure," Louie said. "Take it easy, kid." He grinned at her. "She'll be all right."

"I'll call you, Mama," Rose said. "Tomorrow."

Outside, on the sidewalk, she set down the suitcase for a minute. She was trembling. I'm scared, she said, almost aloud. I've never been so scared. She didn't even know where she'd get the money to eat. Or where she'd sleep. She didn't know that.

Two blocks down, she could see the bus. She'd miss it unless she hurried. She picked up the suitcase and began to run. "Goodbye, Mama," she whispered. "Goodbye." She was saying goodbye to all that, to Mama and Louie and the beer puddles and all that. Somewhere down inside her, in her chest, her stomach, she said hello to something. What was it? Far down inside her, she said hello to something new for Rose. The bus was pulling up at the corner. "Wait for me," she called. "Wait for me."

YOU DON'T KNOW ME

by JANE SPRAGUE

Nobody saw the big black motorcycle go off the road and over the bank. Nobody heard it roar and crash down near the railroad track. Even the policeman didn't hear the motor stop or see the front wheel stop spinning. He was knocked out from hitting his head on the way down. His left leg was under the back part of the motorcycle.

When the young officer began to wake up, he heard voices. They were young voices. Where was he anyway? Then he remembered. He had been going back to the station because his radio had conked out. He must have had a blowout. He remembered flying through the air.

He listened to the voices for a minute with his eyes closed.

"Is he dead?" A boy's voice, about eleven, the officer thought.

"Naw. He's breathing." Older boy talking, maybe seventeen.

"His leg's caught under the cycle. Should we take it off him?" That was Eleven again, the officer thought.

"Leave it," said a new voice that was stronger and deeper. The officer felt a cold fear begin to come. This voice had hate in it.

"He's got a gun, but it's under him." Seventeen said that.

"Good. Then he can't get to it." That was the Hater again.

"The radio's not making any noise. Maybe it busted when they hit the ground." Another voice! How many were there?

Slowly the officer opened one eye just a little. About ten boys were standing there, all around him! He closed his eye again.

The policeman's heart began to pound in his ears. He was starting to feel the pain in his left leg from the weight of the motorcycle. He was beginning to feel that something was wrong with his right arm, too. His gun was on his right side!

Panic went through the young officer's mind. He had seen a policeman brought in two weeks ago. He had been beaten up by a mob of young hoods. His face was so bloody you couldn't recognize who he was. What would these kids do to him? What hope did he have?

Now he suddenly knew that his helmet was gone. His head was lying on the rocky bank. Somehow, he felt worse without the helmet. Now he felt helpless. Without meaning to, he moved his head.

"Hey, he's waking up!" Eleven sounded scared.

The officer decided to open his eyes and see what would happen. Slowly he opened them. It was almost sunset now.

The ten boys bent over the fallen officer. Silently, they stared down at him. Silently, he stared back.

What were they thinking? Eleven looked scared but friendly. Which one was the Hater? That one. Only one look was needed. The Hater stood by the motorcycle. His face was dark with unshaven beard. His black hair was cut long. The Hater looked down at the blond-haired policeman. The officer's face felt wet with sweat. He saw the Hater smile. Did that mean the Hater knew the officer was afraid?

"My name is Philips, Joe Philips," the policeman said. He was surprised to hear how weak his voice sounded.

"What happened to you?" Eleven squatted down near Philips' head and looked into his face.

"Hey, kid. Get away from him and shut up. I'll do the talking." Hater didn't say it loud, but the kid stood up and moved back. The other boys moved away from Philips, too.

"You're in a tough spot, aren't you, Fuzz?" His voice sneered at Philips.

Philips felt sudden weakness. He couldn't pass out again. Not now. "Yeah, I guess I am."

The Hater said, "The big tough policeman has lost his hard hat. He's all mixed up with his bike. He's got a gun, but he can't reach it. The radio on the bike doesn't work. Any nobody knows where he is. Yep, the big tough cop is in a spot all right."

The Hater took out a limp pack of cigarettes and slowly lighted one. Then he blew the smoke in a thick cloud toward Philips' face.

Fighting a wave of sickness, the officer said, "What's *your* name?"

"What do you care? You want to send for me later?"

"Just tell me your first name. How can we talk, if I don't know your name?"

"Talk? A fuzz don't *talk*. He just pushes guys around. No fuzz ever *talked* to me. All my life I been leaning up against buildings while the fuzz look for something to pin on me, something they can book me for. They never *talked*. They just said, 'Get your hands up, buster!' They called me jerk and stupid and a lot of other worse names. What's *your* favorite name, Fuzz?" The Hater took another big drag on his cigarette and then dropped it on the ground.

Philips watched the Hater lift up his heavy high-heeled boot and grind the cigarette to pieces, twisting his foot slowly back and forth. All the time the Hater's eyes never left Philips' face.

The pain in Philips' left leg was growing worse. The heavy motorcycle seemed to be pushing him right into the ground.

"Listen, kid. I don't know who was on duty before. But you don't know *me*. Have *I* ever given you a hard time?"

"Not yet. You're new in this part of town. But you're just like all the rest."

Philips felt suddenly sick in his stomach. He could feel the sweat cold on his face. He'd have to get his leg out from under that bike. He couldn't stand it much longer.

Philips tried to raise himself with his right arm. But at the smallest effort, a flame of pain ran up his arm. A deep groan was forced out of him. Then he passed out again.

The next thing he saw was the Hater's face. He was smoking again. A different look was on his face. Philips was too full of pain to be able to think well. He couldn't tell what was on Hater's mind.

Suddenly, the Hater moved. He came close to Philips' head. Philips' eyes were fixed on those mean-looking boots. Why didn't he get it over with? How long did it take to die from stomping?

But the boots stayed quiet. Instead, the Hater took the cigarette out of his mouth! Philips wanted to scream out his fear until he realized that the boy was only going to let him drag on the cigarette.

"Drag?" The Hater bent down and set the cigarette between Philips' trembling lips. The young officer smoked it gratefully.

Without looking into Philips' face, the Hater stood up. He made a motion to the other boys.

"Let's get that bike off him now."

The boys gathered around the big motorcycle.

"Now!" They moved together, and the terrible weight lifted from Philips' broken leg. He nearly fainted again, but he dragged at the cigarette and hung on.

When he could talk again, he let the cigarette fall from his mouth. The little boy looked up at the Hater once, then bent down and took the cigarette away from Philips' face.

Philips tried to smile at the boy, but he spoke to the Hater. "Thanks, kid. That's a relief."

The boys were all squatting down around him now. It was almost dark. What would they do next? The relief from the weight was gone now, and a deep, heavy pain filled his left leg.

The Hater said, "Hey, kid. You want to go down to the corner and tell somebody to call the cops and an ambulance for the fuzz?"

"Okay," Eleven said. He was up and gone.

"I know how you feel, Fuzz. One time I got beat up pretty bad by a bunch of guys. I was trying to make it home. Two cops came along. They thought I was drunk."

"And you know what they did, Fuzz? They frisked me, and then I fell down."

The quiet, bitter sound of his voice was full of angry truth, the officer thought. Didn't the Hater know that drunks can kill? How could the police be sure without frisking?

Suddenly, a strong, white light moved over all the boys. Then another came from a different direction. The lights stayed on the boys, moving only a little as the cops who carried the lights came down from the road above.

"Hold it, *right there*!" The voice was big and rough.

"Get your hands up over your heads. *Move*!"

Philips looked at the Hater as he slowly stood up, his hands on top of his head. The Hater looked down at Philips. Philips could read the message in his face. The Hater seemed to be saying, "You see? You see how cops are? They don't *ask*, they *tell* you."

What did the Hater expect them to do, seeing a bunch of boys around an officer on the ground with his cycle turned over? Philips wondered. We have to be on our guard.

The biggest cop took charge of the boys. "All right, move over there by the track and sit down. Get a move on. Right there! Now *sit*, and don't move!"

The other officer came over to Philips. "What happened to you, Joe? What did they do to you? We've got 'em all. They'll wish they'd never been born."

"No, Dave. They didn't do anything. I spilled going about fifty. I don't know how it happened, but I ended up down here. The bike was on top of me. The boys took it off. Then they sent a little kid to call the station and get an ambulance."

"Oh, well . . . that's okay, then. They didn't do anything, huh? I thought for sure they did it." Dave looked over at the boys lined up along the track. "The one with the boots is called Foxie. He's as tough a hood as they come, that kid."

Philips looked at Dave. "Maybe he has reasons, Dave."

But Dave wasn't listening. "Hey, Conte, you can let those kids go. They're clean."

"Clean! This bunch of jerks? Who says so?"

"Philips here says. He says they even helped him out."

"Well, that's a switch! Maybe you guys are beginning to learn, after all." The big cop ran his flashlight slowly over each boy's face. "Okay, you can all go, except Foxie. I want you to stay right there, Foxie."

All the boys stood up except Foxie, but they all stayed right beside him.

A siren started to come closer up on the road. Philips knew he would soon be on his way to the hospital.

Dave went up the steep bank to signal to the ambulance as it came screaming to a stop.

Quickly, a wheeled stretcher was lowered down to Philips. Before they started to move him, he called Dave.

"Dave, let the boys help. They haven't done anything wrong. In fact, they acted like . . . like men. Let them help, will you?"

Dave looked at Philips as if he was out of his mind, but he called the kids.

"Foxie, too," Philips said.

"Hey, Conte, send Foxie over here, too, will you? Philips wants him."

The boys walked together over to where Philips was now, strapped onto the stretcher. Conte stood behind them.

"I won't forget what you did for me," Philips said.

Foxie looked at him. "Yeah, I bet."

Philips looked Foxie straight in the eye. "You don't know me, Foxie."

Foxie looked right back and said, softly, "You don't know us, either."

The last thing Philips saw as the ambulance pulled away was the circle of boys' faces glowing red in the blinking lights of Dave's patrol car as it pulled out to speed ahead and lead the way.

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1967

LOS ANGELES CITY SCHOOLS
DIVISION OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

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TEACHING
HAPPENINGS
and
FIVE NOVELETTES

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An Instructional Bulletin
for
B10 ENGLISH

UD 007 688

LOS ANGELES CITY SCHOOL DISTRICTS
Division of Secondary Education
Beverly Boulevard Center
Specially-Funded Programs

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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FOREWORD

This instructional bulletin has been prepared as a resource for use with average and below-average tenth-grade English classes, in the teaching of literary selections developed by Specially-Funded Programs funded through the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.

These literary selections were designed for high interest and appropriate reading ease to meet the reading needs of many urban students. However, some selections may appeal to some students more than to other students, since the ranges of ability and interest of these students are broad. To accomodate this consideration, the reading ease and appeal of selections are varied correspondingly. The teacher, as the person acquainted most closely with the characteristics of a particular class, will be best qualified to choose selections for implementing Tenth-Grade English: An Instructional Guide. Although the selections encompass a wide range in reading ease and interest, all of them have been taught sucessfully in representative B10 English classes and have been evaluated by teachers and by a majority of students as being readily readable, readily understandable, and highly interesting.

Ideally, through these literary selections, teachers will be better able to explore with young people some of the values basic to the ennoblement and ultimately, perhaps, to the survival of man: integrity, courage, responsibility, justice, reverence, love, and respect for law and order.

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INTRODUCTION

What This Instructional Bulletin Contains

This publication presents 1) ways to use Happenings and the five novelettes in conjunction with Tenth-Grade English: An Instructional Guide; 2) suggestions for teaching literature to urban students; 3) suggestions for teaching urban students to discuss effectively; 4) an outline of the organization of lesson plans; and 5) lesson plans for teaching each selection in Happenings and each of the novelettes.

Relation to "Tenth-Grade English: An Instructional Guide"

Happenings and the five novelettes were developed primarily to give students in average and below-average B10 English classes and their teachers literary materials for use in working toward the following objectives, as listed in Tenth-Grade English: An Instructional Guide:

1. Further development of reading skills to comprehend more complex and more mature materials, whether fiction or nonfiction
2. The ability to express one's thoughts and feelings in writing in a manner which is clear, orderly, honest, and well substantiated; reinforcement of habits of correct and appropriate use of the English language in both speech and writing
3. The desire and the ability to discuss a reading experience with classmates and to listen purposefully to all forms of oral exchange of ideas within the classroom

4. An increased appreciation of literature as an interpretation of life, with an increasing awareness of the techniques that authors use to achieve their purposes

5. A greater understanding of the extent to which ethical values influence human experience; a more positive acceptance of those ideals that contribute toward the fulfillment of individual and group needs

Students can be led to achieve these objectives by improving in the skills listed in Tenth-Grade English: An Instructional Guide.

The main divisions of Happenings correspond approximately to the unifying concepts and literary types emphasized in B10 English:

	Unifying Concepts of Tenth-Grade English	Corresponding Unifying Concepts of Happenings
Unit I:	Perceiving Some of Life's Problems	Troubles
In-Common Reading:	Mainly Short Stories	Mainly Problem Short Stories
		Smiles
		Mainly Humorous Short Stories
		Dangers
		Mainly Action Short Stories
Unit II:	Evaluating the Experiences of Others	Outlooks
In-Common Reading:	Mainly Biographical Material	Mainly Biographical Material and Nonfiction

Unit III:	Exploring Emotional Responses to Life	Feelings
In-Common Reading:	Mainly Narrative Poetry	Mainly Poems
Unit IV:	Focusing on Characters in Conflict	Clashes
In-Common Reading:	Mainly Plays	Mainly a Play and Short Stories of Conflict

The five novelettes--*The Fireplace*, *The Long Haul*, *Neutral Territory*, *Night Emergency*, and *Take One Small Seed*--fit most naturally into Unit IV, although they may be taught within any of the other units.

TEACHING LITERATURE TO URBAN STUDENTS

To meet closely the needs of beginning students in senior high school, the selections for Happenings and the five novelettes were chosen initially according to their overall adherence to the following characteristics:

1. with content that is meaningful to fifteen-year-olds
2. with major characters of appropriate age for adolescent identification
3. written from the point of view of young persons
4. of appropriate reading ease to prevent frustration and to promote reading growth--from third- to seventh-grade reading level
5. of appropriate length--from 1,000 to 2,000 words for short stories and articles, and from 4,000 to 6,000 words for novelettes

When the above characteristics are considered, it is evident these these literary materials may contain built-in features that recommend their use with many urban students who are considered reluctant readers. Even with these possible advantages, however, a skillful teacher still is instrumental in bringing the printed words "to life." Teachers unfamiliar with special problems in teaching literature to urban students who are reluctant readers should review applicable parts of English for Low-Index Classes in Tenth Grade and B11 and Tenth-Grade English, both of which contain numerous specific questions and activities for use in teaching literature to these groups.

In addition, the following suggestions, made by teachers experienced in teaching literature to reluctant readers, may be useful:

1. Select a story of appropriate ease and appropriate content for your class, particularly at the beginning of the semester. For example, "A Matter of Good Family" has broad appeal as far as content goes; however, its somewhat advanced vocabulary may discourage some students in very slow classes. Similarly, "Till There Was You" has broad appeal in content; however, the simplicity of its style may disconcert some students in average classes.

2. Have specific but limited objectives for a literary selection. For example, in "Home Again, Home Again," the author gives some emphasis to all of the aspects of storytelling: setting, action, style, character, and thesis. Each of these aspects could be subdivided further to such an extent that one might profitably explore aspects such as plot construction; metaphorical language; dialectal language, and psychological, social economic, and ethical implications. While these explorations may be enlightening for advanced students, too detailed a handling of too many of them may disconcert average and below-average students. It may be wise in teaching "Home Again, Home Again" to concentrate on character development and, more specifically, on what major ideas the author is presenting through Cassie's experiences.

3. Have the sequence of the steps of your teaching plan firmly in mind. In other words, know in what sequence you will present vocabulary items, motivate for reading, discuss a limited number of aspects of the selection, relate to other aspects of English, have the students read the selection, and present related activities.

4. Select vocabulary items that are necessary for the students' understanding of the selection and decide on the most efficient means of teaching the vocabulary items to the students. It may be advisable to present

a minimum number of new words so that the vocabulary part of the lesson doesn't become an end in itself, and thus overshadow the reading.

5. Always motivate students to read a selection. Motivation can be supplied in a number of ways: relate the content of previously read selections to the content of the one at hand; present a hypothetical or real situation similar to that in the selection; relate the experiences of the characters in the selection to the similar experiences of the students; present the content of the selection in question form; or read to the class the opening of the selection, to the point where the problem is established fully.

6. Decide beforehand the best way for students to read the selection. For example, many short stories and articles can best be read silently; however, other selections, such as poems and plays, lend themselves to individual oral reading or dramatic reading. It is wise to avoid routine, rotational oral reading.

7. Always discuss what the students have read in common. Merely asking whether the students like or dislike a selection does not constitute an educational discussion. Two important purposes of an educational discussion are to determine to what extent the students have understood what they have read and to lead them to greater understanding of what they have read. For further information on this topic, see the following section on ways of teaching urban students to discuss effectively.

8. Plan appropriate follow-up activities for selections read in common. Some selection or teaching plans lend themselves to writing assignments, while others may lead naturally into small-group discussions, panel discussions, individual reports, dramatic reading, or exploration of related aspects of language. As a minimal purpose, the selection may serve as an introduction, by either contrast or similarity, to selections that will follow.

WAYS OF TEACHING DISCUSSION TO URBAN STUDENTS*

Many teachers have experienced difficulty in helping urban students to discuss effectively. Some students are reluctant to speak; others quickly create disorder in discussion periods. Teachers inexperienced in leading discussions among urban students may find the following observations made by teachers experienced in these activities helpful.

1. Develop with the students workable standards for discussion. Since many urban students have not readily entered into classroom discussion, they usually lack practice in carrying on a profitable discussion. The standards created should not be so rigid as to discourage response. For minimal standards, the following instructions for the students might be emphasized and explored:

   - listen carefully to all speakers
   - raise hand to speak
   - speak clearly
   - practice form in speaking
   - practice using appropriate language
   - direct your words to the whole class, not to a fellow student opposing your point of view
   - learn to disagree reasonably and courteously
   - support with evidence what you say

2. Channel all discussion through the teacher, especially at the beginning of the semester. Some urban students

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* Many of the suggestions presented in this section are taken from Johnson, Kenneth R., Teaching Culturally Disadvantaged Pupils, Science Research Associates, Inc., 1966.

may become aggressive in supporting their point of view and may fall back on a combative cultural pattern to answer a student holding an opposing point of view.

3. Plan an agenda for discussion, with specific, limited objectives and specific questions. To stimulate a maximal discussion, phrase questions so that they cannot be answered by "yes" or "no."

4. Relate material being discussed to the lives of students, since students with limited cultural experience frequently have difficulty understanding persons whose ways of life are unfamiliar. For example, in teaching "You Don't Know Me," if the students do not readily understand the point of view of the policeman, the teacher might bridge to the experiences of young people with the following questions:

   - In what ways is a teacher like a policeman?
   - What things have you done that are similar to what a policeman has to do while working?
   - How did you feel when you had to stop someone who was doing something wrong?

   Questions might be asked concerning concrete situations in the story:

   - Has anyone here ever fallen from a motorcycle?
   - How did you feel?
   - Has anyone ever been hurt so badly that he couldn't be moved?
   - How would you feel if you were hurt badly and were surrounded by enemies?

5. Occasionally rephrase students' statements, if they are not well stated or if the class could not hear them. However, if statements are continually rephrased, the students may become dependent and may not try their hardest. Also, praise a student honestly whenever he states something well or shows insight. In fact, to a certain extent, "Rephrase and Praise" might be

a productive motto for teachers leading discussions.

6. Emphasize discussion, not correction of dialect or accent. Rigid insistence on the use of standard English speech patterns may inhibit the flow of discussion.

7. Accept, within reason, an unfamiliar point of view. Students may interpret a situation from the point of view of a different culture. The teacher's object should be to acquaint students with the values of the larger society, rather than to supplant a student's values. Moreover, most students quickly learn to give answers that they believe the teacher expects. Students may have to become aware of their own values before they can relate their values to universal concepts.

STRUCTURE OF LESSON PLANS

The following lesson plans for Happenings are subdivided into four basic parts: 1) vocabulary items, when applicable; 2) the number of paragraphs to be read at the opening of the story, for motivating and determining the students' ability to read independently; 3) questions for determining the students' ability to read independently; and 4) discussion questions to be asked when students have completed their reading.

Vocabulary Items

The number of vocabulary items presented varies with the reading ease of the selections. With some very easy selections, no vocabulary items have been listed; for more difficult selections, several items are listed. The number of words that a teacher will present to a class will vary. For some classes, many of the selected words may be new; other classes may be familiar with all of them and would, therefore, not profit from review. It is possible that a teacher with a very slow class will choose to create a list, although no vocabulary items have been offered. A teacher of an average class may decide to select only a few words from the proffered list.

Each teacher will determine an appropriate method of presenting the words to the class. A major consideration, however, is that a teacher should not utilize a method that causes the students to lose interest in the literary selection. Some ways of presenting vocabulary items follow:

- Write the words on the chalkboard, duplicate them, or type them on a transparency, and ask for meanings informally.
- Select students to look up a word and report on it to the class.
- Write the list of words and an unmatched list of meaning; then, direct the students to match the words with their meanings.

Introductory Reading for Motivation

Since many average and below-average students are reluctant readers, teachers may find it necessary to motivate students on every undertaking in reading. Some ways of motivating reading have been briefly mentioned already under the heading "Teaching Literature to Urban Students." Since different selections require different approaches, teachers would not introduce all of the selections in exactly the same way. One way frequently used, however, is to read aloud to the students, from the beginning of a selection to the point where the problem is fully formed. Following this, to direct the students' further reading and to determine the degree to which they have understood what has been read, the teacher usually asks a few pertinent questions, to be answered orally. The number of paragraphs to be read and some appraisal questions to be asked have been provided for almost all of the selections in the anthology. Poems, interviews, plays, and some nonfiction usually require other teaching techniques, which have recommended, where applicable.

Discussion Questions

Every selection in the anthology and each novelette has been provided with cumulative discussion questions which lead toward an understanding of a major feature of the selection involved. Individual teachers may consider another feature of a selection more important: consequently, it is expected that they will provide their own discussion topics. In most cases, the provided questions emphasize what the author has to say about people and life, rather than academic considerations about style or aesthetic form. Also, they are intended for use in oral discussions after the students have completed their reading of the selection, not as a study guide. However, in addition to these uses, many of the questions may be adapted usefully for various follow-up activities such as writing assignments, small-group discussions, and panel or individual reports.

LESSON PLANS FOR HAPPENINGS

TILL THERE WAS YOU

Motivational reading: the first four paragraphs

Appraisal questions:

1. Why did the person who is telling the story throw his radio out the window?
2. Why do you think the person who is telling the story says, "Nobody asked me why I did it"?
3. Why might the person telling the story not want to be reminded of Carol?

Discussion questions:

1. How does the author show that Carol's family didn't have much money when Paul first met her?
2. What did Carol mean when she said, "Is it two days or two years?"
3. If there were nice houses near them, why did Carol's mother and father buy one in the valley?
4. What does Paul mean near the end of the story when he says, "She looked like Carol"?
5. What really made Paul and Carol break up?
6. In this story, what is the author saying about human beings?

NEVER SAID A MUMBLING WORD

Vocabulary:

rumpled
clacked
gloomily
vitamin
scoffed
juvenile
fringe
scattered
excited
practical
dangerous
rickety
squealed
growled
patiently
miracle
donation
gesture
cringed

Motivational reading: first thirteen paragraphs, to the point where the mother says,"...and the rich get richer."

Appraisal questions:

1. What kind of day had Ray expected to have when he started to awake?
2. What actually woke Ray?
3. What were Mr. Johnson and Ray's mother arguing about?

Discussion questions:

1. Why does Ray's mother sing the song that she does early in the story?
2. Why does the author say, "More spirituals got sung that way on Orchard Street than in church"?
3. What trouble does Ray have with his mother?
4. In what ways was Ray unwise to follow Monk's advice?
5. Whay happens in the story that shows that Ray's mother did not learn from her fight with the vitamin salesman?

A LIGHT IN THE WINDOW

Vocabulary:

chuckled
tumble
embarrass
migrant
citrus
scarce
experience
orphanage
managed
seriously

Motivational reading: first eleven paragraphs, to the point where Ernesto says that he wants to quit and get a job

Appraisal questions:

1. What does the father's story about Juanita tell you about the kind of man the father is?
2. What does the place where the story opens tell you about how the father and son get along together?
3. What seems to be Ernesto's major problem in the story?

Discussion Questions:

1. Why does Ernesto try to make the other kinds laugh?
2. In what ways does the father think that Ernesto is not dumb?
3. What might the father mean by "...everybody wonders how he's going to make out in the world.. and he makes out okay if he's a good person"?
4. Why did Ernesto listen "with great interest" to the story about his father's early life?
5. What happenings in the story tell you that Ernesto is close to being grown-up?

GIRLFRIEND

Vocabulary:

probably

expression

tapered

Motivational reading: first three paragraphs

Appraisal questions:

1. After reading the first three paragraphs of the story, what do you think will happen in the rest of the story?

2. In the first three paragraphs of the story, what clues are given that Steve is the main character of the story?

Discussion questions:

1. What is Bill Bordon trying to do when he says about his slacks, "Course you can't buy them like that"?
2. What kind of person is Steve Merrywood?
3. How does the author show what kind of person Steve Merrywood is?
4. What is shown about human relations when Steve, after he has talked with Mary Alice, wishes he had said something real nice?
5. Through the events of this story, what are some of the statements the author is making about life?
6. Why do you agree or disagree that Steve will find another girlfriend as satisfactory as Mary Alice?

THE LETTER

Introduction:

Since this story is very brief and since it will probably be an easy-to-read story for most students, you may want merely to introduce the story and let the students read it for themselves. As an introduction, you may want to bridge from other stories the class has read or you may want to say something like the following:

> Every author chooses his title with a purpose As you read this story. decide if this is the title you would give this story. Tell why

Discussion questions:

1. Describe Al in the following ways: a) as he seemed to you, b) as he seemed to his family, and c) as he seemed to Jim after the last letter.
2. Describe the mother in the story. Why did she seem to let Al take over?
3. Why was Al able to write as if he were still around the house? Where did he get his information? How did the family react to his letters?
4. The family received many letters from the men in Al's outfit after Al died. What do you think the letters were about?
5. Did Al really know he was going to be killed? Why did he write the letter to Jim only and not to the rest of the family?
6. What changes took place in Jim at the end of the story?

THE ELECTION

Vocabulary:

glistened
clenched
clamped
pressure
decision
standards
nominations
assembly
especially
politician
plead
self-assurance
auditorium
conscious
smirk
sincere
candidates
earnestly
applause
announced

Motivational reading: the first eight paragraphs, to the point where Sam hoots at Jim's running for office

Appraisal questions:

1. Who seems to be the major character in the story?
2. What decision did Jim make the day before?

3. How does Sam react to Jim's decision?

Discussion questions:

1. Why did Jim ask for and accept the nomination?
2. Why did Jim's friends really laugh at him the next day?
3. Why did Jim think pleading for votes would be the same as losing?
4. What changes take place in Jim's friends at the end of the story?
5. What does the author have to say to the reader through the events of this story?

FLIES

Motivational reading: the first nine paragraphs, to the point where Steve thinks about his father

Appraisal questions:

1. What do flies mean to Steve?
2. Why are the Merrywoods concerned about Steve's buying fly spray?
3. Although in the opening of the story the author doesn't tell the reader directly what Steve's real problem is, the author does give clues. What are some of the clues as to Steve's problems?

Discussion questions:

1. Why did Junior talk of running away?
2. Why did Junior think that Steve shouldn't run away?
3. Why did Mr. Merrywood fuss a great deal when he stayed home?

4. Why does Mrs. Merrywood scold Steve for speaking ill of his father?

5. Why does Steve feel guilty "from feeling good about taking a trip because his father was dead"?

6. In what important way has Steve changed by the end of the story?

THE HORN AND ME

Motivational reading: the first five paragraphs

Appraisal questions:

1. What did the father mean when he said, "Life is a big _if_"?

2. What does the title mean?

3. From what has been read, what do you think the story is going to be about?

Discussion questions:

1. What kind of person is the main character in the story?

2. Why does the main character know that the horn is for him?

3. The main character says that he didn't know what he wanted to be. In what way was the main character different from the other kids who didn't know what they wanted to be?

4. What did the main character mean when he said, "We were all walking the same way"?

5. What do you think would have happened to the main character if he hadn't found the horn?

NO HOP

Motivational reading: the first three paragraphs

Appraisal questions:

1. What does the author say that makes us realize how much Manuel really likes to play the drums?
2. Why was the hop after Easter important to Manuel?
3. From what has been read, what do you think might happen in the story?

Discussion questions:

1. In what ways was Manuel's father right or wrong in getting rid of the new guys?
2. If school doesn't "mean much" to Manuel, why does he go through the trouble of getting Mary and Bill to talk to the vice-principal?
3. In what ways was the vice-principal right in calling off the dance?
4. What does it tell us about Manuel when we read "There would be no trouble inside the gym. Manuel would see to that"?
5. Why was Manuel's way of dealing with trouble more effective than his father's way?

LAST RESORT

Vocabulary:

resort
hesitated
injuries
position
cogs
clutter
deftly
deflected
slithering
reversed
swooping
complaint

Motivational reading: the first four paragraphs

Appraisal questions:

1. Where does the story happen?
2. Who seems to be the most important person in the story?
3. Why is the coach sending Vic Naylor into the game?

Discussion period:

Since this is a story in which plot is emphasized, it may be difficult to hold a thought-provoking discussion with the class. Nevertheless, after the students have read the story, you may want to measure their understanding by discussing various aspects of the story through questions such as the following:

1. Why is Vic worried about the difference between "I _have_ to put you in" and "I'm _going_ to put you in"?
2. What is Vic's problem in the story?
3. Why does Vic feel good when someone says "Nice going, kid"?
4. Why is it satisfying to read this kind of story?
5. What makes this story seem either real or unreal to you?

THE LIFESAVER

Vocabulary:

piggy
warped
disaster
snorted
insane
whispered
ashamed
flickering
attorney

Motivational reading: the first fifteen short paragraphs, to the point where Mike wants to spend Arthur's money

Appraisal questions:

1. Why does Mike warn Arthur not to tell the salesman how much money they have?
2. After Mike says, "Tell him he is an insane pig," why does Arthur say, "He says you have a nice sense of humor"?
3. Why did Mike want the car desperately?

Discussion questions:

1. What words and phrases does the author use to describe the salesman?
2. How do these words and phrases affect you?
3. Does the author want you to dislike the salesman or to be amused by him? Give your reasons.
4. Why does Arthur wonder, early in the story, why the salesman wouldn't give them the key to the car?
5. More than halfway through the story, the salesman admits that he speaks Spanish. Why doesn't he admit it earlier?
6. How does Mike get the salesman to buy back the car?
7. Why did the author use the title "The Lifesaver"?

FAINT HEARTS AND FAIR MAIDENS

Vocabulary:

threat
signature
concentrate
rescuing
bothered
surprised
crumpled
unsigned
suspicious
graduation
assignment
stammered

Motivational reading: the first paragraph

Appraisal questions:

1. Why did someone cut words and letters from a newspaper to send a note?
2. What did the sender of the note want Fred to do?
3. What might happen in the story?

Discussion questions:

1. Why did Fred feel that the first threatening note was unfair?
2. What made Fred finally speak to Linda?
3. Why did Fred's father stop giving him advice?
4. Why did Linda send threatening notes when such notes might have turned Fred away?
5. For what reasons was Linda right or wrong for sending the notes?
6. What tricks did the author use to keep us interested in the story?

WHAT IS NEXT?

Motivational reading: the first nine paragraphs

Appraisal questions:

1. What seems to be Sam's problem?
2. How does Sam's brother feel about Sam's problem?
3. What is funny about the father's line: "Your brother Bob still is"?

Discussion questions:

1. What did Lou mean by the note: "Bury it"?
2. What is humorous about the line: "What good does being well do him?"

3. How was Sam's problem finally solved?

4. What might Sam mean when he says "There are some things it is better not to tell"?

5. What are some features of this story that make it pleasing to read?

6. How might Sam's problem stand for many kinds of problems that young people have?

UNDER THE LIZARD

Vocabulary:

Ivy League
museum
mammal
dinosaurs
especially
production
permanent
salute

(Also, some students may ask for the meanings of paleontology and plesiosaur.)

Motivational reading: the first five paragraphs

Appraisal questions:

1. What clues are there that the speaker is a high school girl?

2. What kind of a person is Eddie?

3. What seems to be the girl's problem in the story?

Discussion questions:

1. Why is the girl surprised when Eddie offers to take her to the museum?

2. Why does Eddie like to go to the museum?

3. Disregarding her feelings toward Eddie, how does the girl feel about the dinosaur skeleton hanging from the ceiling?

4. What does Eddie mean when he says, "...that's their stick...to act dumb" and "It might pay off in school"?

5. What are some of the meanings of the girl's last line in the story: "And the next time he sees a lizard, tell him to salute"?

PRIVATE REILLY AND THE MESS HALL MESS

Vocabulary:

private	cadences	ladles	griddle
corporal	officers	innocent	vinegar
sergeant	quarters	whistled	criminal

Motivational reading: the first three paragraphs

Appraisal questions:

1. In the opening paragraphs who seems to be speaking?
2. What seems to be the speaker's problem?
3. What do you think will happen in the story?

Discussion questions:

1. What is funny about the line "Where are the potatoes?"
2. What does the following line tell us about Private Reilly: "I put on great speed, for me, that is"?
3. Why does the new cook pour vinegar on the bacon?
4. What is funny about the name Old Breadbasket Brown?
5. At the end of the story, why do "the cooks stand guard at the doorway with meat cleavers and knives"?
6. Although the things that happened in the story might not happen in real life, why is it fun to read a story like this?

CINDERELLA--THE TEEN-AGED BEAUTY QUEEN

Vocabulary:

portable
modeling
overhaul
contest
cruised
gorgeous

Motivational reading: the first two paragraphs

Appraisal questions:

1. What do the opening four words of the first paragraph tell the reader about the story?

2. How much money did Cindy have?

3. What will probably happen in the story?

Discussion questions and activities:

1. In spite of the fact that "Cinderella" is known by most young persons, what makes this telling of it interesting?

2. Here is a translation of the first sentence into standard English: "Years ago a young lady was in serious difficulty." What makes the first sentence used in the story more interesting?

3. Translate the second sentence into standard English.

4. In what ways are the events of this telling of this Cinderella story like the events of the usual Cinderella story?

5. Here are lists of equal expressions. Why are the ones the writer uses more satisfying?

poor quality	more scratch than rock
not good-looking	right out of "Chiller"
big	built like a jukebox
frightened	hit the panic button
disturbed	lost her cool
leave	ditch the scene

Find other expressions that are equal. When might a person want to use the standard expression?

6. Although the Cinderella story is not realistic or true to life, why do people still find it pleasing to read?

THE MESS-UP

Vocabulary:

couch
trembling
shivering
covey
sinus
baying
bass
jiggling
dribbled
carriage
whirled
diesel
damage
hunched
contract

Motivational reading: the first sixteen paragraphs

Appraisal questions:

1. Why is Cal's grandmother upset at the opening of the story?

2. What may be the meaning of the title "The Mess-up"?

Discussion questions:

1. Some writers underplay humor. For example, what does the grandmother really mean when, thinking of the school ground, she questions, "It's all paved, ain't it?" or when she says "I wouldn't want you runnin' over no trucks"?

2. What are some reasons why Cal makes a mess of many of the things he does?

3. Why does Uncle Melvin finally permit Cal to stay?

4. Why does the author use happenings, such as Cal's driving through the back of the garage, which are not completely realistic?

5. What are some other exaggerated happenings in the story?

6. What parts of Cal's story are lifelike?

7. What are some of the pleasures in reading a story like "The Mess-up"?

THE FIXER

Motivational reading: the first two paragraphs

Appraisal questions:

1. What kind of person does the main character seem to be?

2. What seems to be the character's problem?

3. From what has been read, what do you think will happen in the story?

Discussion questions:

1. What is funny about the line "While she did that, I made myself some toast and jelly sandwiches and fried a couple of eggs"?

2. How did the mother probably feel when her son was on the phone?

3. What is funny about the line "But you'll ruin the pipe"?

4. Why did the speaker decide to take a walk when his mother was freed from the pipe?

5. In what ways was the mother right or wrong for not letting the son fix things in the future?

6. Using humor, the author of this story writes lightly about one of the conflicts between parents and children. What is the conflict behind the humor? If the author had handled the conflict seriously, what would the story have been like?

AIR OF MYSTERY

Vocabulary:

delighted
mystery
whine
pleasant
jumble
bay windows
nuisance
yelping
burrow
frightened
terrified
sternly
eerie
shambles
perched
budge
weird
fluttering
imagination
haunted
faint
fumbled
finicky
baffling
thaw
pigeons
versed

Motivational reading: the first ten paragraphs

Appraisal questions:

1. Who seems to be the major person in the story?

2. What happens at the opening of the story?

3. What feelings does the author seem to want the reader to have at the opening of the story? Can you show several places where the author tries to give the reader this feeling?

Discussion questions:

1. Authors often give readers clues as to what is going to happen in a story. In what ways are the following sentences clues?

   "And I love old houses. There's such an air of mystery about them."

   "Jackie sat in the hallway looking through the door. He refused to budge."

   "I see you have an animal. That's nice. I am very fond of animals."

   "She had the strangest feeling that there was someone, or something, in that apartment with her.

2. What other sentences give the reader clues about what is going to happen in the story?

3. Why doesn't the writer tell the reader at the opening of the story that there is a snake in the apartment?

4. What clues does the author give near the end of the story that Marie is a clever person?

5. What are some featrues of "Air of Mystery" that make it pleasurable or exciting to read?

THE RETURN

Vocabulary:

confidently
stared
neighbors
detention
interrupted
marshal
director
diploma
details
calloused
probation
restaurant
refrigerator
smothered

Motivational reading: the first paragraph

Appraisal questions:

1. Where does the story take place?

2. Who seems to be the main character of the story? What clues are there in the first paragraph that he is the main character?

3. What does the story seem to be about?

Discussion questions:

1. Early in the story, Jim remembers "he did not even realize he had the shovel in his hands." What does this line tell the reader about Jim when he first went to camp?

2. What does Jim mean when he says of Robby and Wesson, "They couldn't take it"?

3. Why was Jim proud of his callouses?

4. Why was Jim sent to detention camp?

5. Why did Jim feel sad when he returned home?

6. What "clicked" inside of Jim to keep him from taking his mother's car?

7. What does Jim mean when he says that he has callouses inside, too?

FREEWHEELING

Vocabulary:

precious
sassy
jagged
echoed
upholstery
vinyl
avalanche
trench
neutral
sediment
snarled
sulked

Motivational reading: the first two paragraphs

Appraisal questions:

1. Where does the story happen?

2. How many people are in the car?

3. About how old are the people?

Discussion questions:

1. The author doesn't tell you directly where the story happens, but he gives clues that tell you where it happens. What are some of the clues?

2. Why was Brian beginning to feel uncomfortable about letting the others talk him into driving to the snow? What has ever happened to you that made you feel the same way?

3. How does Brian plan to get out of his difficulties early in the story?

4. What accidents might happen on such a trip? What accidents have you had on trips?

5. Brian remembers that the others were fun to be with at lunch time or at a party. Why does he feel differently toward them now? When have you felt the same way?

6. When the car comes out of the stream, the author writes that the car looked "like a surfacing submarine." What other words could he have used after "like"?

7. In the same paragraph the author writes that the tail pipes under water sound "like a wide-open motor boat in the home stretch of a race." This is called a comparison. What other comparisons could he have made?

8. When Sue says, "L--et's get out of here," why is the dash used after L?

9. What are some clues that Brian thinks quickly under pressure?

10. In what major ways are Brian and Gene different?

THE TIP-OFF

Vocabulary:

swooped
tavern
deserted
disappeared
smuggler
border
cylinder
broiling
grim
mirth
taunted
flexing
muscles
glowered
interrupted

Motivational reading: the first four paragraphs

Appraisal questions:

1. Where does the story take place?

2. What words does the author use to tell us where the story takes place?

3. What seems to be happening in the story?

Discussion questions:

Since this is a story in which action is emphasized, it may be difficult to hold a thought-provoking discussion with the class. Nevertheless, after the students have read the story, you may want to measure their understanding by discussing various aspects of the story through questions such as the following:

1. What is the main problem in the story?
2. Where in the story does the author give a hint to the reader as to what is going to happen later in the story? What would happen to our feelings about the story if the author didn't give us hints?
3. In this story is the author trying to emphasize what people are like, what the desert is like, or what people do? (character, setting, plot)
4. Why doesn't the author tell us at the beginning of the story that the bartender is Nick?
5. What makes this kind of story pleasing to read?
6. What makes this story seem either real or unreal to you?

THE BIG SHOT

Vocabulary:

nervous excitement
gulps
initiated
operation
shattered
self-disgust
shuffling
unconscious

Motivational reading: the first four paragraphs

Appraisal questions:

1. Why is Carlos feeling nervous excitement in the opening paragraph?

2. What is Carlos trying to prove?

3. Why might Carlos not want to risk being seen?

Discussion questions:

1. Why does Carlos feel self-disgust when he touches the brass knuckles?

2. Why does Carlos want to join the gang?

3. Why does Carlos want to call off the strike before he has really started it?

4. How does Carlos feel about the woman he plans to rob?

5. Explain the lines: "...Carlos heard a noise like a car backfire. The weight on him slumped sideways."

6. Explain the line "Their eyes burned into Carlos in the back seat of the police car." Does the line tell how the watchers felt or how Carlos felt?

7. Why does Carlos bury his face in his hands?

A MATTER OF GOOD FAMILY

Vocabulary:

This selection being a conversation between two college professors, one might naturally expect a somewhat high level of vocabulary. Although there may be several words that will be difficult for some students, it may be wise not to dwell on the difficult words to an extent that the students lose interest in the story. The following twenty words are perhaps too many for a class to cover prior to reading. If you know that the class will have difficulty with all of these words, you might want to select ten or so for the chalkboard and discuss them informally prior to reading. You may want to discuss some of the remaining words during the discussion period.

excerpts
precise
bigot
fraternal
menial
ordained
available
existence
sacrifices
dedicated
inherited
offensive
dominated
propriety
integration
confusions
revenge
prejudice
cosmopolitan
bachelor of arts

Reading activity: Since the interview is presented almost wholly through dialogue, this may be an opportunity to have several students present a reading to the class. You may want three students to prepare their lines a day ahead. On the day of the reading, the students could participate by reading silently their own copies.

Discussion questions:

1. What made Dr. Jackson get college degrees and become a college teacher? In what ways may her family have helped her?
2. Early in her life, Dr. Jackson resented her father father's neglect of his family. Why did she come to respect him later in life?
3. What does Dr. Jackson mean by "We inherited what money and class can't give"?
4. What is Jess B. Simple's solution to integration?
5. What, according to Dr. Jackson, is the difference between caste and class?
6. For what reasons does Dr. Jackson think that the use of standard speech is important?
7. What does Dr. Jackson mean by the line "We all have to pretend at times"? What examples of pretending have you seen?
8. In what ways does Dr. Jackson's life show that she is interested in solving problems?

THE DUKE OF ELLINGTON

Vocabulary:

special
chords
stretched
emotions
commercial
pianists
especially
influenced
development
entertainment
communities
admission
attraction
orchestra
imagination
inspiration
contradictions

Motivational reading: the first paragraph

Appraisal questions:

1. What in the first paragraph makes it sound as if this selection is going to be about a real person?
2. In what ways was "Duke" like other young Negroes?
3. Why did someone start calling him "Duke"?

Discussion questions:

1. Why would it be true to say that Duke Ellington wasn't really sure what he wanted to be when he was young?
2. What finally made Duke Ellington take up a musical career?
3. Why did Duke Ellington start to make up original tunes?
4. What does the author mean by the line: "The Duke's talent could not be locked in a small box with a neat label on it"?
5. According to the author, what makes Duke Ellington's music great?
6. According to the author, why may Duke Ellington be remembered longer than a President of the United States?

GOODBYE TO MY FATHER

Vocabulary:

layers
canyon
telegraph
buggy
guitar
crutches
tractor
leased
greasy
waitresses
arteries
medicine

Motivational reading: This personal essay has an artistic form not unlike that of a short story. In the first two paragraphs, the author creates a mood and states his subject. In the opening paragraph, an overall view of time is announced and a contemplative mood is set. In the second paragraph, the subject is narrowed to personal time, and the contemplation is narrowed to self-contemplation. You may want to read these first two paragraphs aloud to the class.

Appraisal questions:

1. What makes the first paragraph sound serious?
2. In what important way are the thoughts of the first paragraph connected with the thoughts of the second?
3. What do you expect will happen in this personal story?

Discussion questions:

1. In what ways was the father's early life like the life of ancient Egyptians or the ancient Greeks?
2. Why does the author give us several pages of day-to-day details from his father's life?
3. What does the author expect us to think about when he talks about his father's death and his own death?
4. The author says that his father lost his farm early and was poor the rest of his life; yet, the author says his father was a good man. What does this tell about what the author thinks is important in life?

5. Why does the author mention the Grand Canyon again on the last page?

WORDS-WORDS-WORDS

Vocabulary:

language
continental
magnetic
adhesive
correction
residence
dictionary
occupation
references

Motivational reading: the first paragraph

Appraisal questions:

1. What is the speaker's complaint in the first paragraph?

2. In what important way are the first and second paragraphs related or connected?

3. What do the uses of the word continental illustrate?

Discussion questions:

1. Here are two lists of words that may have the same meaning. Why are the words the author uses more satisfying?

prances ---- walk
dig -------- understand
bread ------ money
pad -------- home
cats ------- friends with style

2. What is the difference between dig and understand or bread and money? When would you want to use dig or bread?

3. A translation into standard English of the sentence "Like where do you make your bread?" Might be "At what place do you earn your living?"

Translate the following items into standard English:

"I have a neat white pad, with a lot of cats
hanging around."
"Quit buggin' me, man. Flake off."
"I speak a cool lingo for swingin' cats."

4. In what way does the speaker do exactly what he accuses teachers of doing?

TALK WITH A MODEL GIRL

Vocabulary:

interview
seriously
cosmetics
experiment
clinic
convention
executives
self-confidence
erectly
detract
enunciating
sincerity

Reading activity: Since the interview is presented almost wholly through dialogue, this may be an opportunity to have three students present a reading to the class. You may want these students to prepare their lines a day ahead. The students in the class could participate by reading their own copies silently during the presentation.

Discussion questions:

1. What does Conchita mean by the line "It 's a real inside beauty course, not only outside"?

2. Why does the modeling school try to increase the self-confidence of the girls?

3. What are some of the ways young persons, both females and males, show their lack of self-confidence?

4. How can unclear speech affect your personality?

5. Conchita seems to be a successful model. Why, then, is she going to college?

6. What examples of labeling people have you seen?

7. According to Conchita, how does a person go about getting self-confidence?

NIGHT CHASE

Introduction: This news report was written from the accounts of witnesses to the happening.

Vocabulary:

routine
nervous
nightmare
straight
swerved
whirled
screech
whizzed
ignition
genuine

Motivational reading: the introductory paragraph

Apparisal questions:

1. What would a routine motor patrol for a motorcycle policemen be like?
2. What words in the introductory paragraph tell you that this is not going to be a routine motor patrol?
3. Why doesn't the author tell us in the introductory paragraph what is actually going to happen?

Discussion questions:

1. Why does the author start the story with the policeman traveling 60 miles an hour the wrong way on the freeway?
2. What made Wheelis decide to turn his cycle around and head the wrong way? What must have been his feelings about his own safety?
3. In what ways did Wheelis show that he could think clearly in dangerous situations?
4. Why didn't the author tell us what finally happened to the driver and the car after the car was stopped?
5. Why do you think that Wheelis did or did not deserve the Award of Merit?

OPEN COUNTRY

Vocabulary:

fierce
circled
trudged
freezing
tumbled
shattered
shimmering
precious
miracle
complexion
pastures
rattlesnake

Motivational reading: In spite of the fact that these two selections are personal essays or reminiscent narratives, they do have an artistic form not unlike that of a short story. In the opening of each, a mood is established and a problem is implied. Therefore, in order to measure the students' ability to read the selections silently, it may be wise to read to the class at least the first paragraph of "Shooting a Crow."

Appraisal questions:

1. What tells you in the first paragraph that this is a true story?
2. How do you know from the first paragraph that the writer is writing about his youth?
3. From what has been read so far, what do you think might happen in this true story?

Discussion questions:

Shooting a Crow

1. In the second paragraph, why does the boy list the things he could destroy with his rifle?
2. In the same paragraph, why does the author write "burst the living heart of a rabbit" instead of "kill a rabbit"?
3. Why does the boy shoot the crow a second time?
4. Why doesn't the boy ever touch the gun again?

The King Snake

1. Why does the writer say "Spring sometimes brings love," not "Spring brings love"?

2. How does the boy feel about himself? In what ways are many young persons like him?

3. In what ways can a girl be like "flowers in brick-lined beds," "cool water from a deep well," and "a star in the dusky evening sky"?

4. If this true story is largely about a girl, why does the writer title it "The King Snake"?

5. Why did the girl want the boy to free the snake?

6. The author fell in love with another girl and probably let the king snake go. What, then, does he mean by the closing lines "I think I still love them both, a little. I think I always will"?

LAST SONG FOR A SHEPHERD

Vocabulary:

gnawed
Russian
particular
hutch
responsibility
ecstasy
pretended
loamy
tautly
sentimental
conscience

Motivational reading: This personal or autobiographical essay has a definite artistic form; however, you may not want to emphasize artistry at the expense of content. In the first paragraph, the author swiftly tells us his subject and takes an attitude toward it, thus creating a mood, which at first is neither definitely serious nor comic, perhaps merely straightforward. To motivate your class and to reach a point at which you can measure their ability to read the selection independently, you may want to read the first two paragraphs aloud.

Appraisal questions:

1. What does the author say that makes us think that this is a true story?

2. The author says, "There were times later, when I hated him." Does this mean he loved the dog most of the time, that he hated the dog most of the time, or that he loved and hated the dog for equal amounts of time? Why?

3. What do you think the title means?

Discussion questions:

1. At what point in the essay do you first know that something bad is going to happen to the dog?
2. What ideas does the author give that make the essay more important than just a sentimental story of the death of a dog?
3. The author says, "Dogs die and men die, and they are gone from us. But we go on." What does he mean by "But we go on"?
4. In what ways is the new dog like the old dog?
5. What does the author mean by "But he'll be his own dog"?
6. What is the most important idea of the essay?

AMERICA IS A BECOMING PLACE

Vocabulary:

sprawling
entwined
pizza
strudel
tempura
borscht
pralines

It is likely that some classes will have difficulty in supplying contextual meanings for words and phrases such as, "high and sprawling," "fixed and finished," and "white roads." However, the best course may be to postpone explanation of their meanings until discussion of the meanings of the total poem.

Motivational reading: After talking about the difficult words, you may want to read the poem to the students while they read silently from their own copies. Then, let them read the poem to themselves.

Discussion questions:

1. The title has more than one meaning. What are two possible meanings of the title?

2. Who is speaking in the poem?

3. How can a city be "high and sprawling"?

4. What do the foods in stanza three stand for? Why might we call these foods symbolic?

5. What are several of the possible meanings of the first line of the fourth stanza: "America sings more than one song." Why is this indirect way of expressing this idea more memorable than the expressions of its possible meanings in the classroom?

6. What might be some of the problems to be solved? Does the poet limit the problems to individual problems or to social problems?

7. Whom is the poet addressing?

8. Is the poet optimistic or pessimistic about the future of America? Give evidence from the poem to support your choice.

9. What are some of the major ideas that the poet expresses about America?

THREE VIEWS OF SELF

Vocabulary:

masquerade
Halloween
athlete
transistor
carburetor
geometry

Some students may have difficulty explaining phrases such as "scents and red rubies," "baited hook catches jewels," and "in his cage and stripes," but it may be wise to ask for explanations of these expressions during the discussion of the meanings of each poem.

Motivational reading: Since the poems are in some respects progressively more difficult, you may want to read each to the class and discuss it before going on to the next.

Discussion questions:

Masquerade

1. What in the poem shows that the speaker is a young man?
2. Why is Halloween every day for the speaker?
3. What do "scents and red rubies and golden gongs" stand for?
4. What is the speaker telling us about getting along in the larger society?

Secrets

1. Here are the main ideas of the poem:

> I do not doubt my identity. I am not a dumb person who tries to answer unimportant questions. I am not a person nobody notices. I am not a lonely outsider, looking with envy at more fortunate people.

Why is the way the speaker says it more interesting?

2. What are some of the things the speaker knows, and what do these things tell us about the speaker? For example, what does his seeing jewels in the scales of a fish tell us about him?
3. What does "My hour will get here" tell us about the speaker?
4. Through this poem, what is the poet telling us about most human beings?

The Tiger in His Cage and Stripes

1. Here is a plain retelling of what the poem says:

> Animals, even ones in zoos, do not seem to worry about their identity (who they are) as I do. I seem to lose some of my realness by living in a crowded, busy city. I feel

> more certain of my self in natural surroundings.
> I wish I could live in the city and feel as
> certain of my self as nature feels certain
> of its various selves.

In what ways are the poet's expressions of these ideas more interesting to read and to listen to?

2. In what way is a city like a cage?

3. In what ways does the speaker think city dwellers are incomplete and unfree?

THE NEW BOY

Vocabulary: Perhaps the only word that may give an average class difficulty is "vulnerable." If there are other words that you know will be difficult for reluctant readers, you may want to write those words on the chalkboard. However, to avoid loss of student interest in the poem, their meanings should be asked informally. Most classes will have difficulty in supplying contextual meanings for words and phrases such as, "unguarded," "open," and "findable without defenses," but it may be wiser to explore these during the discussion of the meanings of the total poem.

Motivational reading: After talking about "vulnerable" and any other words that may cause difficulty, you may want to read the poem aloud to the students while they follow on their own copies.

Discussion questions:

1. Where does the poem take place?

2. What clues does the poet give that tell the reader where the poem takes place?

3. How many ways in the first stanza does the poet show that the boy is new?

4. What are two possible meanings of the title "The New Boy"?

5. What does "Answering more questions/ Than he asks" tell the reader about the boy?

6. Who is speaking in the poem?

7. What scene takes place in the poem?

8. How does the girl feel about the new boy?

9. What is the poet's major purpose in the poem?

10. What important statements does the poet have to make about young adults?

TWO LOVE SONGS

Motivational reading: After talking about difficult words, you may want to read "The New Eve" to the students while they read their own copies silently. Then, let them read the poem to themselves before discussion.

Discussion questions:

The New Eve

1. What tells us about how old the speaker of the poem is?

2. According to the speaker, how does a Cherokee Indian walk? In what ways does the girl walk differently from a Cherokee? In comparing her to to a Cherokee, is the speaker praising the girl or making fun of her?

3. What does the speaker mean by "my eyes blur/ When she turns away"?

4. What tells us that the speaker has not known the girl long?

5. What is the meaning of the title?

6. The speaker starts in the present time and moves to the past. What does he accomplish by his powerful comparison to Adam and Eve in the final two stanzas?

Tie a New Cord

1. At the opening of the poem, how do the two people feel about one another?

2. What did the girl's parents think of the speaker?

3. Did "Stormy Weather" really bring about the change between the two people?

4. What does the speaker mean by "the black clouds now are our clouds"?

5. How do the two people feel about one another at the end of the poem?

6. In what important ways is the second poem different from the first poem?

YOUNG LOVE

Vocabulary: Perhaps the only words that may give an average class difficulty are "implored," "mellow," and "restored." If there are other words that you know will be difficult for reluctant readers, you may want to write those words on the chalkboard. However, to avoid loss of student interest in the poem, their meanings should be asked informally. Some classes may have difficulty supplying contextual meanings for the phrases of the poem, but it may be wiser to explore the meanings of these during the discussion of the meanings of the total poem.

Motivational reading: After talking about "implored" and any other words that may cause difficulty, you may want to read the poem aloud to the students while they read silently from their own copies. Also, you might want to point out to the students that the poem contains three paragraphs or stanzas of eight words each, and that each stanza describes a complete scene.

Discussion questions:

1. How many people are there in the poem?

2. What happens in the first stanza?

3. What happens in the second stanza?

4. What cruel word might have been said?

5. What does "Voice loud" mean in the poem?

6. What does "Look cool" mean in this poem?

7. Why would the phrase "Heads turned" not be as good as "Heads bowed" in the second stanza?

8. What happens in the third stanza?

9. In what ways would presenting the stanzas in a different order change the poem?

10. The poet used 24 words to tell a story. How many words did we use to tell the same story? What does this difference tell us about one of the features of poetry?

HAIKU: EIGHT STRAIGHT PLUS SIX HIP

Introduction:

Since many students may be unfamiliar with poetry in general, it may be wise to introduce them briefly to the poetic form of haiku. To do so, you may want to discuss some of the following ideas.

> One of the reasons football is enjoyable for both the people in the stands and the players is that a football game has rules which the players must follow and the viewers must understand. What would happen if we put 22 men on a field with a football but no goals, no lines, and no rules? There would be no game. There would be only confusion. We can't have a game without limits or rules. What are some of the rules we must have for a football game?
>
> Similarly, we can't have a painting without a surface to paint on. And the size of the paper or canvas is another limitation or rule. The size we choose determines how big the things we draw can be. (This can be shown by drawing two frames for

pictures on the chalkboard, one large and one small. small.) Also, we have to follow rules for making the figures of our paintings. Ordinarily, a person should not be larger than the house he is standing next to. Ordinarily, a person should have two eyes, not three or five. These are only a few rules for painting.

Songwriters have to follow rules, too. What would happen if we sang the words of one song to the music of another song? We would have to make changes to make them fit.

A poet, too, follows rules when he writes poetry. He follows rules of language and rules of form. In the kind of poetry we are going to read, the poet limits himself to very few words to describe a feeling or a scene. Part of the fun of reading what he writes is knowing the rules he followed.

Read to the class the explanation of haiku before going to the poems. Then, read the first haiku to the class. You may want to examine some of its meanings through questions like the following.

Discussion questions:

1. Who might be speaking?

2. What does he see?

3. Here are some of the ideas of the poem, but not written in the haiku form: "Isn't it amazing that this tiny seed in my hand will grow into a large, beautiful tree with magnificent blossoms, edible food, and more seeds that will themselves continue the process of growing over and over."
   Why is the poem itself more fun to read?

You may want to break up the poem into units of sound so that the students can see the rules of form.

Cher/ry/ seed/ flow/ers 5
For/ twen/ty/ A/prils/ and/ fruit 7
For/ twen/ty/ sum/mers 5

Of course, you will want to examine the rest of the poems primarily for content. You may want to use some of the following questions or statements.

Poem 2: In what way can a single grain of rice stand for a whole summer and a whole spring?

Poem 3: In what way is a cat chasing a mouse like a lover longing for a loved one?

Poem 4: How can a peddler selling food in bad weather remind us that our own youth is gone?

Poem 5: How may the education of one boy result in the development of a new way of life for many?

Poem 6: Enjoy life before it's too late.

Poem 7: A man warming himself by a fire looks into the fire and is reminded that his loved one far away may be comforting herself in the same way. That is why he encourages the fire to do its duty.

Poem 8: In what way would a hungry cat be helped if the birds it was trying to catch were arguing?

The six hip haiku are easier to understand. The students may want to explain them without help.

DROPOUT'S COMPLAINT

Vocabulary:

recorded

taped

guitar

registrar

Motivational reading:

After talking about the difficult words, you may want to read the poem aloud to the students while they read from their own copies silently. Then, give them time to read the poem to themselves.

Discussion questions:

1. Who is speaking in the poem?
2. In the first stanza, what clues does the speaker give to show that the speaker's troubles are with school?
3. What five things can the speaker do well?
4. Why is he bitter if he can do these things well?
5. How does the speaker think the registrar will feel about him?
6. What was the speaker's solution to his troubles?
7. Why will his leaving not really end his troubles?

LENNY

Introduction:

This is a short play about young people and the problems they face in becoming adults. Some of their problems are enduring ones: materialism versus altruism; self-expression; responsibility to family, friends, and the larger society; and ultimate death. Some are more rooted in the twentieth century: the need for more education, military service, and the difficulty of maintaining individualism within an ever-increasing population. Of course, you may not want to identify the philosophical labels (ethics, ontology, etc.), but you may want to let the problems emerge naturally from the reading of the play.

Vocabulary:

graduated
stubbornly
mimicking

experience
choir
attention

struggling
audience
shrugged

affectionately
mysterious
hesitates

Reading activity:

Since the play was written more for reading than for production, this may be an opportunity to have several students give a dramatic reading in your English class. You may want four students to prepare their lines a day ahead. An additional student could be responsible for arranging chairs or desks for the three scenes and for narrating. The remaining class members could follow by reading silently from their own copies.

Discussion questions:

During or after reading of the play, you may want to discuss some of its aspects through questions similar to the following:

1. In what ways is Lenny right or wrong when he says, "Money. If you've got it, you're safe"?

2. Similarly, in what ways is Florence right or wrong in her emphasis on talent?

3. What reasons does Lenny give for being disappointed in life? What reasons does Sandra give to disagree with him?

4. Lenny, talking big, says that Florence's father is a bully. In what ways is he being unfair to the father?

5. By the time of his death, what important changes have taken place in Lenny?

6. By the end of the play, what important changes have taken place in Sandra and Pete?

HOME AGAIN, HOME AGAIN

Vocabulary:

glare
corpse
stirred
mane
trembled
stroke
whittled
credit
charity
slumped

Motivational reading: the first nine paragraphs

Appraisal questions:

1. Why doesn't Cassie know the man who comes to the door?

2. How does the man help her to remember him?

Discussion questions:

1. Why does the rocking horse remind Cassie of the taste of an old penny on the tongue?
2. Why is Cassie angry with her father at first?
3. Why is the mother more kindly toward the father than Cassie is at first?
4. What made Cassie change toward her father at the end of the story?
5. Why will Cassie never again be the kind of person she was at the beginning of the story?

THE RED VELVET DOG

Vocabulary:

miserable
cramped
stretched
wrinkled
ditching
shrill
screamed
velvet
stagger
suitcases
whispered

Motivational reading:

Since the problem in this story is implied, rather than stated, it may be wise to read to the class to a point at which the class members evidence interest and appear to have some grasp of the story. Rapid classes may grasp the story by the end of the first or second paragraph; slower classes may need to get well into the story.

Appraisal questions:

1. Why does Laura seem to be the main character in the story?
2. What seems to be the main problem in the story?

Discussion questions:

1. In what ways does Laura take the father's side in the story?
2. In what ways is the father right in the story?
3. In what ways is the mother right in the story?
4. In what ways was the father right or wrong in taking Laura to the fair?
5. What does the red velvet dog stand for in the story?
6. Why do you think the father will or will not return to the family?

THE GAME

Vocabulary:

infirmary
chords
guitar
grainy
linoleum
denim
screak
insurance
agency

Motivational reading: the first fourteen paragraphs

Appraisal questions:

1. Why did Billy know "he ought to be gone"?
2. What made Billy stay?
3. Why was the father really angry with Billy?

Discussion questions:

1. What is Billy's problem at the opening of the story?
2. In what ways is the father right in putting the guitar away? In what ways is he wrong?
3. What reasons does Billy have for visiting Mrs. Ladd after school?

4. Why does Mrs. Ladd say that she polishes the guitar in her house every week?

5. Why doesn't Billy tell Mrs. Ladd the guitar isn't a good one?

6. How does Billy solve his problem in the story?

SOMETHING NEW FOR ROSE

Vocabulary:

graduated excited straightened fouled up

Motivational reading: the first nine paragraphs

Appraisal questions:

1. What kind of person does the mother seem to be?

2. What happenings show that Rose and her mother do not get along?

3. What seems to be Rose's main problem in the story?

Discussion questions:

1. What seem to be the main reasons for the trouble between Rose and her mother?

2. What does the wiping of the books with a Kleenex tell about Rose?

3. What kind of girl was Rose three years earlier? What changes have taken place in her?

4. Why does the mother tear pages out of one of Rose's books?

5. Why does the mother threaten to get rid of Louie? What does this tell you about the kind of person the mother really is?

6. What is the meaning of the line "Far down inside her, she said hello to something new for Rose"?

YOU DON'T KNOW ME

Vocabulary:

motorcycle
policeman
officer
breathing
recognize
unshaven
favorite
twisting
stomach
realized
gratefully
direction

Motivational reading: the first seven paragraphs

Appraisal questions:

1. What happened in the opening paragraphs?
2. Why did the officer feel fear after hearing the voices?
3. What seems to be the main problem in the story?

Discussion questions:

1. Why did the officer feel worse when he found his helmet gone?
2. Why is the Hater angry with the police?
3. Why does Philips watch the Hater as he puts out his cigarette?
4. Why does the Hater finally let Eleven call for an ambulance?
5. How does Philips feel about the frisking the Hater talked about?
6. What is the meaning of the title "You Don't Know Me"?
7. In what ways does the author avoid taking the side of the police or the side of the boys in the story?

LESSON PLANS FOR NOVELETTES

THE FIREPLACE

Introduction:

Most students will have no difficulty understanding the literal events of the story, but they may have difficulty understanding what some of the events stand for. The subject of the story can be stated, of course, in several ways. From the broadest point of view, it is the story of a young person's initiation to some of the burdens of adulthood, including the realization of imminent death. From a narrower point of view, it is merely the story of a young person's introduction to the workday world.

The subject from the broadest point of view can be readily supported from the events of the story. The black mortar, dwelt on heavily in the story, seems to stand for death or, at least, the unpleasant facts of existence. Early in the story, the mason objects to the mortar; and at the end, Henry feels that "He probably would never get all that black mud off him." In addition, three kinds of death are carefully catalogued by the author. The school teacher dies from old age. Steve's wife dies by accident. And Henry's father dies from disease. If these symbolic events are not taken into account, Henry's religious reactions in the final paragraph of the story become less explicable.

Since the story is a somber, symbolic one, you may want to assign it to selected students for independent reading.

Vocabulary:

mortar
slate
licensed
dye
hellion
quivered
insurance
detergent
mason

Motivational reading: the first four paragraphs

Appraisal questions:

1. What seems to have happened before the story opens?
2. How do the stonemason and Henry get along with each other?
3. From what has been read what do you think the story is going to be about?

Discussion questions:

1. What reasons did the mason have for being unpleasant to Henry?
2. Hating the mason the way he did, why did Henry want to go back the next day?
3. (optional) The mason is not given a name until the beginning of Chapter 2 in the somewhat unusual expression "'No, ma'am,' Steve said, the mason." Why does the author wait so long to name the mason, and why does he use such an attention-getting way of naming him? (The story is told from Henry's point of view. The mason does not assume an identity until Henry starts to understand him and like him.)
4. What three ways of dying are mentioned in the story? What are Henry's reactions to these kinds of death?
5. Why does Henry get angry with the woman?
6. Why does Henry cross himself in the final scene?
7. Read the final paragraph. What has Henry learned from what happened in the story?

THE LONG HAUL

Vocabulary:

blaspheme
convertible
possession
absolute
felony
conviction
probation
microscope

medicine
operation
considerable
petition
illegal

Motivational reading: the first seven paragraphs

Appraisal questions:

1. What kind of person does Porter seem to be?

2. In what ways is James different from Porter?

3. From what has been read, what do you thing might happen in the story?

Discussion questions:

1. Early in the story, what does James mean when he says, "What's rright and what is, they're not always the same"?

2. Why does Porter kid James for working hard to buy a car?

3. At first, why does Laura like Porter better than James?

4. Early in the story, in what ways does James show that he likes Laura?

5. Why did the police have to arrest Laura and James, along with Porter?

6. What does James mean when he says, "I'm in for the long haul"?

7. Why did Laura give up Porter for James?

8. What have Laura, James, and Porter learned from what happened to them?

NEUTRAL TERRITORY

Vocabulary:

neutral
territory
raisin
obviously
conversation
cruising
bridesmaid
corpses
fend
flourishes
distinctive
explosively

lurking
khakis
conveyor belt
christening
sponsored
apparently
unbearable
groom
procession
regretfully
diagonally
whine
recognized

Motivational reading: the first four paragraphs

Appraisal questions:

1. Where does the story take place?

2. How old is Richard?

3. What is the meaning of the sentence "All he had were places not to go and people not to see"?

4. After work why did Richard have to wait inside the well-lighted market until he saw his bus arrive?

Discussion questions:

1. What is Richard's attitude toward life at the opening of the story?

2. What is Richard's problem at the opening of the story?

3. In Chapter 1, the market manager speaks to Richard; and, at the beginning of Chapter 4, Richard speaks with an older man. How does Richard feel about adults? Why are his feelings toward adults right or wrong?

4. In Chapter 3, Richard doesn't wait inside the market after work for the bus. What change has taken place in Richard?

5. Halfway through Chapter 2, the author gives just a few details to describe Mary. What kind of a person is she? What is her attitude toward life? How does she get along with people?

6. Describe what the author means in Chapter 5 by "an impossible blue sky through black bones of trees."

7. Stump did the actual killing. Explain why he is not the only one who is responsible for Richard's death. Who else or what else may be responsible for Richard's death?

NIGHT EMERGENCY

Vocabulary:

emergency
orderly
congratulations
straightened
explanation
especially
technician
excitement
oxygen
knowledge
organization
bruises
professional
concussion
surgery
incision
patient
swivel
security
efficient

Motivational reading:

Since the author has room in this long story to set her scene and to delay in presenting the problem, you may have to read several pages to the class (probably to the place where Dugan enters and bargains with Rex) to reach a point at which you can measure the students' ability to understand the story independently.

Appraisal questions:

1. How did Rex feel about work?
2. At the opening of the story, how does Rex treat his brother Chuck?
3. From what has been read, what do you think is going to be the main problem in the story?

Discussion questions:

1. Why does Rex get a job at the hospital?
2. By the time he got his first paycheck, in what ways was Rex a changed person?
3. Why did Rex tell Dugan, "I'm my own man"?
4. In what ways does the girl's death change Rex?
5. After working in the hospital awhile, why didn't Rex get a charge out of Wilma's place anymore?

6. In what ways did Rex show that he could think well and act quickly under pressure?

7. At the end of the story, why did Rex feel that things were evened up?

TAKE ONE SMALL SEED

Vocabulary:

striped
refrigerator
margarine
scratched
counselor
daughter
pursing
application
cemetery
straightened
wailed
paunchy

Motivational reading:

Since the author has more room in this long story to develop his theme and since he implies Luz's problem rather than stating it, you may have to read to the class up to the middle of the first chapter, where Juanito indicates that Luz had a crush on Sullivan, to reach a point at which you can measure the students' ability to understand the story independently.

Appraisal questions:

1. Who seems to be the most important character in the story? Why?

2. What duties does Luz have around the house?

3. From what has been read, what do you think is going to happen in the story?

Discussion questions:

1. Why does the mother dislike Enrique early in the story?

2. How do you explain the fact that, although Luz knew that she loved Enrique, she was pleased when Sullivan said that his marriage plans had fallen through?

3. Why does Enrique make Luz decide between college or him?

4. What are Luz's mixed feelings when she learns of her brother's death?

5. Why does the mother suddenly call her son Juan instead of Juanito?

6. Luz says repeatedly that she knows what she wants to do, but what does she actually do?

7. Why does Luz's buying seeds at the end of the story give the story a hopeful ending?